COMMUNICATIVE ASPECTS OF CHILDREN’S ART MAKING:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIALOGIC IN CHILDREN’S VISUAL ARTS

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ABSTRACT

Despite the plethora of perspectives researchers have used to study children’s art, noticeably few researchers have attempted to provide strategies to elucidate the multilayered and responsive nature of visual languages in children’s art and the complex discourses in which children engage when making art. Consequently, the diverse and complex processes and meanings surrounding children’s art making often seem to be described in limited terms. The purpose of this study was to examine the communicative aspects of children’s art making. This study focuses on the multiple layers of communication in children’s art making and children’s early communication during art making. The study also includes a discussion of the interactive realm of children’s art, which focuses on children’s interactions, the circulation of visual messages, and the role of art making in their daily lives.

This research was conducted in a preschool located in a university-affiliated town in the Midwest. In the data-collection process, ethnographic methods were used, including observations, interviews, videotaping (to record children’s art-making process), analysis of the environment, and collection of documents in the selected classroom. As verbal and visual data were collected from the classroom environment, children’s talk and their evolving images were observed to be the main implements by which the flow of interaction and communication in context could be understood.

This study approached the real actions of children across multiple communicative phases through observations of their art making. Results showed that the children used visual art as a cultural tool to communicate with others. Twenty-three communicative patterns were identified within their verbal and visual utterances during art making. In the analysis of art-making events, multiple types of utterances, different purposes, and various influences were observed to be
operating together. Both the children’s verbal and visual utterances were formed from various
types of talk, ranging from individual mediation to social negotiation, and these utterances had
different purposes, such as art-related talk, play talk, self-talk, personal stories, and social talk.
The term, “visual utterance,” is meant to capture the multiple symbolic languages involved in
the generation of images and the stories behind the images, including the verbal discourses, the
nonverbal interaction, and the context, in order to elucidate more fully the complexity of
children’s process of creating visual images. Children’s various underlying meanings and
communicative practices acted together to create utterances that emerged from internal
negotiation, multiple relationships with others, and influences of the larger social discourse.
Children construct communicable meanings in their art-making process through the interpersonal
process of acquiring the importance of the other, and the mediated process of recognizing how
the self makes meaning. Whenever children’s art-making process is investigated by focusing on
their actions, talk, and the visual images they are creating, we should remember that particular
situated contexts and the children’s internalization processes need to be valued as achievements
of self-consciousness in dialogue with social factors.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It is easy to be misled about the nature of visual art in the early childhood period. For many years, researchers believed that children’s art making originated from a form of inborn power; thus, they focused on the process of solitary artistic development. Beginning in the early and mid-20th century, a strong view toward children’s art, as being spontaneous and innocent, was constructed based on a belief in self-expression; this is often called a child-centered approach. The emphasis on a child-centered approach, including ideas promoted by Lowenfeld (1987) and Read (1958), pursued children’s free artistic expression, and art was regarded as a means of curing the harms of society. Whereas earlier studies considered children’s artistic development as genetic, universal, and occurring in linear stages, more recent studies suggest that learning contexts, along with other societal and cultural factors, influence children’s artistic development. Several studies have since acknowledged that children’s artistic development is greatly influenced by sociocultural factors (Thompson & Bales, 1991; Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Wilson 1977).

This study examines the communication used in art making by using a systematic approach. Because communication cannot be separated from sociocultural factors—as observed by Mikhail Bakhtin (Holquist, 1990), who suggested that we cannot understand utterances without their context—the importance of situation is indivisible from our understanding of the meanings the transmitter delivers.

As Malaguzzi (1993) explained, art is a means of communication for children, who trade in a hundred languages—a transmitting process of sharing their experiences and thoughts. Furthermore, there are various purposes for visual art making in the early ages of childhood; it could be inner dialogue, an early step in learning to write, symbolic
representations of the culture and the child’s experiences, or a communicative tool to deliver messages.

This study focuses on the multiple layers of communication in children’s art making. This emphasis corresponds to the educational philosophy of the Reggio Emilia approach, which emphasizes the interaction and communication that occur through art making as well as what the children are really doing, rather than emphasizing issues of concern to the teachers or other adults (Katz, 1993). Because a number of studies examining children’s self-expression have already extensively researched children’s creative development, in this study I limit the discussion to aspects of communication in art making. As stated earlier, even though this study developed from sociocultural studies of children’s art, it focuses more on the interactive realm of children’s art in terms of focusing on their interactions, the circulation of visual messages, and the role of art making in their daily lives. Some previous studies (Eisner, 1972; Lindstrom, 2000; Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Wilson, 1977) examined a range of cultural influences in children’s visual art making by examining a large group of children’s artistic products, whereas other studies (Dyson, 1989, 1993; Frisch, 2006; Gallas, 1994; Thompson & Bales, 1991) used a more focused view to investigate what children do and say as they work together. This study follows the later stream of research on children’s art making in that it provides an up-close view of how children communicate in the process of art making.

The term communication is a broad word to define. However, the most basic idea of communication is that it is a two-way or multiple-way interaction and transmission of messages. According to Ellis and Beattie (1986),

Drawing all of these threads together we can formulate a working definition of communication which asserts that communication occurs when one organism (the
transmitter) encodes information into a signal, which passes to another organism (the receiver) which decodes the signal and is capable of responding appropriately. (p. 3)

From this working definition, it is clear that communication is a dynamic process composed of the interactions between the transmitter and the receiver and between human beings and the environment. In addition, communication provides a public realm for the transmission of information and the circulation of languages (Budwig, Wertsch, & Užgiris, 2000).

Several components of communication can be studied, such as the content of dialogues, tones of voice, and other characteristics of verbal interaction (e.g., rate of speech) or nuances of communication (e.g., nonverbal interaction). All these aspects can be found in dialogues among people. In a similar fashion, the visual arts can be characterized as visual languages. The process of acquiring the visual mode can be considered a form of language acquisition, with visual communication being a two-way or multiple-way passing on of messages through the use of a visual or in the process of making a visual. In looking at young children’s art making, it is meaningful to look at the early development of their visual language. To address this point, I apply Bakhtin’s theories of communication to study the communication in children’s art making. Unlike other scholars who have studied language and literacy development extensively, Bakhtin focused on “the real unit of speech communication” (Budwig et al., 2000, p. 4). To quote Bakhtin (1986):

"behind each text stands a language system. Everything in the text that is repeated and reproduced, everything repeatable and reproducible, everything that can be given outside a given text (the given) conforms to this language system. But at the same time each text (as an utterance) is individual, unique, and unrepeatable, and herein lies its entire significance (its plan, the purposes for which it was created). . . . The second aspect (pole) . . . is revealed only in a particular situation and in a chain of texts (in the speech communication of a given area). This pole is linked not with
elements (repeatable) in the system of the language (signs), but with other texts (unrepeatable) by special dialogic . . . relations. (p. 105)

Communication includes the opposing facets of systematic signs used to convey meanings via languages and the actual uses of the system at the same time.

Bakhtin also regarded communication as the basis for social life (Doe, 1988). Bakhtin identified the communicative aspects of human social life in the genre of the novel, especially through extensive studies of Dostoevsky’s novels. He investigated in depth how the discipline of language has been forming and how it acts in our social life. He assumed that each person becomes aware of and is disciplined by his or her own external and internal communicative experiences (Doe, 1988).

Likewise, this study focuses more on those communicative and interactive processes within the art-making process. Focusing on children’s actions in researching that situation provides a meaningful way to see the early development of communication in early childhood.

**Problem Statement**

In the early childhood classroom, it is common to observe a number of children engaged in art making, whether in an adult- or teacher-instructed activity or through children’s voluntary participation. At each moment throughout this artistic process, we can attempt to understand their acts, purposes, or intellectual levels by using multiple theoretical perspectives. Over the past 100 years, various studies have attempted to understand children’s art from various perspectives, such as in relation to cognitive development, sociocultural influences, and the postmodern perspective. There have been numerous findings regarding child art, but it has been difficult to see children’s art making as a whole process that has multiple layers of diverse factors. Regarding the value of creativity, for example, in the mid-20th century children’s drawings were seen as tools to measure their intelligence.
Pearson (2001) noticed that children’s art-making process had been researched according to the researcher’s purpose, rather than as a means to understand children’s art-making process. For instance, if a researcher wanted to study gender differences in children’s drawing, this was usually done by analyzing the subject matter of the drawings to find the variances when children made art while ignoring the meanings in the drawings or ignoring other contexts, such as their conversations, the various relationships they formed through dialogue, or their physical environment. Thus, Pearson insisted on the need to see children’s art making as a complicated process, not by focusing on documenting what the children made, but by considering the process through which the product emerged. Thompson (2006) further reflected on Pearson’s argument:

Pearson’s critique articulates a shift in thinking more profound, even, than the movement toward direct observation of drawing events, a trend that recognizes the thick layers of information that become available when researchers witness a drawing being made and the contextual influences that are enfolded in the final product. (p. 231)

From this point of view, we need to reconsider the way children create art by considering the context around them. In this study, I follow the arguments of Pearson (2001) and Thompson (2006) further by researching children’s art-making process in holistic ways. I believe this research is a legitimate attempt to understand children’s drawing while focusing on the situation and context. To quote Thompson (2006),

There is a need for increasingly situated studies of children making art and interpreting visual images in the company of other children and adults, in the contexts where significant learning about art occurs, in classrooms and community-based programs, families and neighborhoods. (p. 238)
By looking at children’s shared dialogues, their interaction, and their communication through and during the art-making process, this study broadens our understanding of the complex process of children’s art making. It is an attempt to understand children’s art making by searching for multiple roles and meanings in their drawings, and multiple approaches are needed to conduct research in this direction. It is truly impossible to understand children’s drawings without considering their context, yet only a small number of studies in art education have provided a detailed account of the situated contexts in which children have made art.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is intended as an investigation of how children’s art making is composed of multiple layers of values as these interact with children’s experiences and contexts. I conducted research on 4- and 5-year-old children’s art-making process by looking at the context of their actions, interactions, and visually represented images. By approaching children’s art making in this holistic way to analyze their actions in situated contexts, it further promotes our understanding of their art making as a dynamic process. To provide a theoretical framework to study the discourses, communication, and actions that occur as children create visual arts, I borrowed from the works of Bakhtin and other important scholars.

Although the term communication is ambiguous, I mainly adopt Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism, hybridity, and the importance of context in exploring children’s communication through the art-making process. Even though Bakhtin’s works were mainly focused on language and literature, it is appropriate to borrow his ideas to understand the nature of language and communication in children’s art making. An examination of Bakhtin’s notion of dialogic relations is helpful in understanding these aspects of communication. In addition, I explore Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic nature of communication and borrow his idea of the
utterance in researching children’s interaction through art making, wherein children are assumed to be negotiating and making art in reciprocal ways. Bakhtin’s theory makes the mutual aspects of children’s interaction and communication more visible as they engage in reciprocating the utterances of others.

In this light, Bakhtin’s idea of the utterance is legitimate for extending the discussion on children’s art in a new direction. The idea of the utterance developed by Bakhtin has been investigated in the discipline of rhetoric, and Frisch (2006) has extended the discussion on the utterance to the visual arts, as seen in the following quotation:

All languages relate to their special contexts in the past, present and future. When Bakhtin places language in an historical and social context he claims that any utterance is related to the community’s utterances. In any utterance one will find traces of earlier utterances and the source of future utterances in the social sphere. A drawing can be seen as an utterance. According to Bakhtin’s theory a drawing will incorporate configurational signs from the community. In the drawn picture you will find past configurational signs, those of the present and the source of future configurational signs. Bakhtin claims, in his theory, that any utterance comes partly from the child and partly from others. We could then say that the drawing belongs both to the child and to the community. (p. 77)

From this passage, we realize that when children are drawing, they are engaged in using a visual language they have absorbed from certain communicative interactions with their surroundings. In addition, it is important to be aware of children’s drawings as visual utterances because this makes it possible to understand the configurational signs of the context and the past, present, and future situation of the community. As stated earlier, children’s drawings have been misunderstood in many ways by not considering the context in which they were made, but rather by looking only at the final outcome (Pearson, 2001;
Therefore, visual utterances, as actual dialogues that happened during the children’s art-making process, were investigated, along with the significance of children’s meaning making and their communication through art. Studies of children’s art have focused on explaining their individual artistic development rather than on their drawing as a visual language in which a certain culture and community are represented. As Frisch (2006) claimed, children’s drawings are representations of their dialogic learning processes of communicating with the people surrounding them and interacting with the cultural influences in that situation. In previous studies, I found that children were definitely communicating through art in diverse ways. These could have been through playful moments, making presents for their mothers or peers, or building friendships. Based on this point of view, the primary direction of this study was to research communicative aspects in children’s art making, with a focus on the art-making process and other inputs around the art table.

**Research Questions**

This investigation of the communicative aspects of children’s art-making process was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the communicative aspects in the supervised and spontaneous making of visual art? What kinds of communicative aspects can be defined in children’s art making?
2. How might the communicative aspects of children’s art making promote children’s learning?
3. What are the implications of studying children’s communication through visual art for teaching children in early childhood?

**Significance of the Study**

Despite the plethora of perspectives researchers have used to study children’s art, noticeably few researchers have attempted to provide strategies to elucidate the multilayered
and responsive nature of visual languages in their art and the complex discourses in which they engage when making art. Consequently, the diverse and complex processes and meanings surrounding children’s art making often seem to be described in limited terms.

In this study, I adopt a comprehensive perspective to find the richness in children’s natural art-making process, which is composed of various forms of discourses. I use Bakhtin’s theories of communication and the dialogic nature of discourse to further investigate this process. Just as Bakhtin viewed the relationships in human life as being naturally dialogic, we can infer that children’s art making is dialogic by looking at the role of others, the influence of context, and children’s art making as representing the many voices of young artists as they engage in social interaction.

For many years, children’s art making has been considered an individual activity. However, I propose that children’s creation of art is a process of communicating through a visual language (Dyson, 1989; Frisch, 2006; Gallas, 1994; Katz, 1993; Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Wilson, 1977). Traditionally, children’s art making has been validated by focusing only on the presented aspects, whereas their hidden messages and intentions have not been considered. Thus, I investigate children’s art-making process in holistic ways to capture the structures of meaning and communication within it. I propose that for children, art making is equivalent to having a visual voice and creating conversational narratives to understand the world in dialogic ways. One should consider the dynamic art-making process within the public realm because children acquire and utilize visual symbols through interactions within the context of community. The public realm of art making is related to the development of intersubjectivity and the space of authoring. At the same time, just as Bakhtin argued for the everyday uses of collected language systems, one should regard the individual realm as being how children negotiate those cultural manifestations in the early ages. The individual realm of art making
is associated with the reflexivity of how to connect their daily lives with the use of graphic representations.

According to Bakhtin, language itself is multilayered and multivoiced. Hence, I argue that research on children’s art should also take into account the dynamic nature of their visual languages. These languages are layered with multiple frames, symbols, and meanings as they engage in highly intelligent and dynamic communicative strategies. My focus is on the verbal and visual dynamics of children’s communication, on their interactions as they engage in this process, and on the simultaneous intersubjectivity (the public realm) and reflexivity (the individual realm) of the process (Užgiris, 2000).

**Overview of the Chapters**

In this chapter, I introduce the purpose of the study and the research questions used to guide my study. I suggest that a need exists to explore the communicative aspects of children’s art making. To investigate the communicative aspects of art making, Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism is briefly introduced as a theoretical basis for examining the complex layers of children’s communication through the arts. To gain a better understanding of children’s art-making process, prior studies are reviewed in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 also includes a historical review of research on children’s art making, Bakhtinian concepts of communication, and the communicative aspects of children’s art making. Chapter 3 describes how the research progressed, what kinds of methods were used in generating data, and how the research site and participants were chosen. It also describes the use of qualitative research methods and data analysis strategies. Chapter 4 shows the findings from this study, as presented through categories of coding. It displays the coding categories that emerged when researching how children communicate when making art and how they build up art experiences by interacting with others through making art. Chapter 5 describes a selected art-making process that focused on one participant, Daniel, and includes a discussion of his
pictures, his discourses, and the context. Chapter 6 discusses the findings used to clarify the research questions further. It also includes implications of the study of communication through art for teaching art to young children and provides suggestions for future research.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I examine the previous literature to guide my research on children’s art making, theories of Bakhtin, and communicative aspects in the creation of art. The studies presented in this chapter contribute to my conceptual framework by indicating that children are actively communicating during visual art making and that children’s art making involves multiple layers of components. These concepts have meaningful implications for children’s learning of visual art.

The chapter begins by reviewing a brief history of child art. It discusses developmental perspectives and sociocultural perspectives to look at children’s artistic process and the image of the child. The second section describes the theories of Bakhtin to look at communicative aspects in children’s artistic process. The last section investigates communicative aspects of the creation of art.

Theories of Children’s Art Making

This research investigates how children’s art making has been defined in relation to the idea of childhood and how these views have been used to facilitate youngsters’ learning in the field of art education. I begin by examining how and why universal developmental theories prevailed in the middle of the 20th century and further discuss the constructed image of childhood and its relationship to beliefs surrounding the role of artistic creation at that time. Next, I focus on the discourses of theorists holding the opposite position, the belief against the universality of children’s artistic development. Many researchers have challenged the traditional notions of childhood and developmental theories. Further, they have focused on the contexts around children and the importance of experiences they have undergone. By
recognizing the importance of children’s contexts and experiences, they have challenged the natural view of childhood, and have attempted to find and promote the qualities and value of children’s learning. The emphasis on the sociocultural influences on children has emerged as an issue as appropriate pedagogies have developed, with children being seen as having a more active role in society.

**The Early and Mid-20th Century: Developmental Perspectives**

The strong view toward children’s art as being spontaneous and innocent was constructed based on a belief in self-expression, and is often called a child-centered approach. I begin with a discussion of self-expressionism in relation to theories of children’s artistic development. I also look at the creation of “child art” in self-expressionism and investigate how developmental psychology is interrelated with the construction of a particular notion of the ideal child.

**Self-expressionism**

Franz Cizek was the pioneer of child art and a leading figure in the field of art education. An artist from Austria, Cizek originally “made a large collection of children’s drawings to share with his fellow artists” (Leeds, 1989, p. 99). Soon, because of his fascination with children’s drawings, he turned to education and founded the Vienna Juvenile Art Class, where he taught for 40 years (Leeds, 1989). This school, the Vienna Juvenile Art Class, became the model for art classes for later art educators, including Viktor Lowenfeld and others who believed in self-expressionism.

Cizek viewed all children as having natural creative power that differed according to the individual (Viola, 1936). He observed dissimilarity between the drawing styles of educated children and those of uneducated children by examining the drawings of the children of a carpenter’s family (Unsworth, 2001). Based on this finding, he suspected that
the guidance of adults had hindered children’s innate creative power. He argued that the main role of the art teacher was to foster creative ambience as a guide.

Like Cizek, other self-expressionists—those who focused on children’s innate power—were concerned with the individual learning processes that would allow children’s own creativity to blossom. This idea of children having innate creativity originated with the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (Burton, 2001; Leeds, 1989; Wilson, 2004). Corresponding to the views of Rousseau, Lowenfeld believed that children’s art making should be protected from societal and cultural influences so that children could express their experiences innocently. Likewise, Herbert Read stated in *Education Through Art* (1958) that “children are born creators and remain so until their native art impulses are killed by the imposition or imitation of adult standards concerned with skill and literal fact” (p. 206). It is clear that these scholars attempted to protect children’s innate power from the outer world.

**Universal developmental theory and children’s artistic development**

Cizek’s philosophy of art teaching swayed both Lowenfeld and Read (Duncum, 1982), the main figures in self-expressionism. Lowenfeld clearly emphasized the importance of free expression in making art. To understand Lowenfeld’s theory of children’s artistic development, one other point is important—the interesting fact that self-expressionism and developmental theories were based on psychology (Kim, 2005).

In the 20th century, cognitive psychology—the scientific study of how people obtain knowledge in building the intellect and the mind—predominated. Piaget’s developmental psychology indicated how human beings developed intelligence and how children acquired knowledge through certain developmental processes, from the sensorimotor stage to the preoperational stage, to the concrete operational stage, and then to the formal operational stage. Similarly, psychologists hypothesized, from a cognitive developmental perspective,
that as children grow, their art proceeds through certain stages, and that these stages applied to all children.

As in Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Lowenfeld believed that children followed linear sequences of artistic development, from the scribble to the preschematic, to the schematic, to realism, and eventually to naturalism. He believed children could reach the goal of artistic development naturally. Because children have an innate capacity for developing “cognitive organization” (Efland, 2003, p. 55), Lowenfeld thought that open access to various media and active experience were required to promote motivation. He believed that in a nurturing environment, children’s minds would grow as they explored their inherent curiosity.

Thus, Lowenfeld’s developmental model was based on the view that children’s artistic development followed an unfolding process. Lowenfeld argued that freedom of expression and the function of art would serve as a means of balancing the intellect with the emotions.

**Aspects of learning and the construction of childhood**

In this section, I discuss how these scholars viewed children’s artistic process in relation to learning and how the idea of childhood was constructed at that time. As discussed earlier, Lowenfeld (1935) believed expression was the way to balance the intellectual and emotional domains, and he viewed “art as a form of play” (p. 110, as cited in Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 134). In a similar fashion, Read asserted that it was possible to liberate human beings through educating them in the arts. From this perspective, we can infer that Lowenfeld and Read regarded children’s artistic process as “a way to facilitate the development of a healthy personality” (Efland, 2003, p. 63). Along with the emphasis on self-expression, the extent to which Lowenfeld and Read focused on aspects of spontaneity and the unconscious level of thought in the art-making process is intriguing. According to Lowenfeld (1987),
The very act of creating can provide new insights and new knowledge for further action. Probably the best preparation for creating is the act of creation itself. Giving children opportunities to create constantly with current knowledge is the best preparation for future creative action and thinking. (p. 75)

Thus, the underpinnings in psychology and the beliefs underlying cognitive developmental theory were predominant in the way children’s art-making process was viewed. This resulted in children’s artistic process being seen as a decontaminating process, with an effort made to protect children from society and to emphasize children’s individual expression, which could be cultivated in the context of a moral education (Kim, 2005).

As it relates to the construction of child art, we need to consider the origins of self-expressionism. Efland (1976) referred to Cizek as the father of “school art” at the beginning of the century, with school art meaning a form of art that is produced in school by children under the guidance and influence of a teacher (Tarr, 1989).

Wilson (2004) criticized the construction of child art, saying, “Child art, which is generally assumed to be a natural artifact of childhood which is essentially unaffected by culture, is itself a cultural construction” (p. 299). He viewed child art not as a natural consequence of children’s free expression, but as a product of adult interference. Moreover, Wilson argued,

What I wish to claim is that the teachers of child art, the Cizeks, the Lowenfelds, the Frank Wachowiaks, the Blanche Jeffersons, the Natalie Robinson Coles, and all the other gifted art teachers—the teachers whose students created such luscious examples of child art, themselves through their language, their motivations, and their instructions, their guiding technique and processes—created child art! (p. 310)
The most important part of this argument is that self-expressionists, who believed teachers should allow children to express their own ideas and have freedom in drawing, were culturally influencing those children to produce child art.

Wilson’s argument regarding the constructed nature of childhood has a deep connection with the research of Jo Alice Leeds. Leeds (1989) also questioned the constructed nature of child art. Among the brilliant insights of Leeds into the attitudes toward child art was the observation that “The recognition of child art as a unique form of human expression with qualities of its own was a natural outcome of these attitudes” (p. 95). In other words, she argued that childhood should be seen “as a distinct state of being” (p. 95). Leeds pointed to the romantic view toward children, that is, that society could have a harmful impact on them, a belief that reached its zenith in Rousseau’s idea of childhood.

The historical overview of child art offered by Leeds (1989) provides a fundamental understanding of how child art has been created and studied. For example, she described the “otherness” of childhood, the objectification of children, and the mystification of the art-making process. As a reaction to World War II, self-expressionism was intended to protect children (Burton, 2001), but by contemporary standards, self-expressionism can also be seen as a nice collection of historical attitudes toward children’s art.

In addition, in the context of the emphasis on childhood in self-expressionism, it seems that children’s art making became “otherized” as one of the natural and mystical ways of creating art. The interest in children’s art was also used by modern artists, such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Pablo Picasso, as can be seen in the following quotation:

The qualities that these early modern artists admired in children’s art had as much to do with the spirit and process by which children create as with the products of their efforts. What these artists sought was the openness of feeling, the directness of
approach, the imaginative plasticity of mind so natural to children, which had come to be recognized as characteristic of creativeness in general. (Leeds, 1989, p. 100)

Often, self-expressionists called this a child-centered approach, but the fact was that children’s drawing was identified as a very spontaneous and instinctual act. As Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) noted, the ambiguity of child-centeredness revolves around the question, “Who is the child on whom practice is centered?” (p. 43). In other words, we need to consider how children’s art has been created in a particular genre.

Taken together, in the early and mid-20th century, the belief prevailed that all children had intrinsic creative power and that they moved through a universal developmental process. The emphasis on a child-centered approach, including those promoted by Lowenfeld and Read, pursued children’s free expression, and art was regarded as a means to cure the harms of society.

At the same time, children’s expressiveness and spontaneous art making were valued by modern artists and educators “as a prototype of the human creative impulse” (Leeds, 1989, p. 101). Psychology, particularly cognitive psychology, influenced the formation of self-expressionism and artistic developmental theories. As the self-expressionists pursued the creative impulse in children’s art making, a unique style of child art emerged, which focused on natural and instinctive drawings.

**Contextual Influences on Children’s Artistic Development**

**Vygostsky’s zones of proximal development**

There has been a growing trend toward stressing children’s particular surroundings, as opposed to the Piagetian concept of unitary and predictable stages of cognitive development. It is essential to include the views of Lev Vygotsky in any discussion of contextual influences on children’s artistic development. The following quotation is highly important in understanding his philosophy of education: “Human learning presupposes a specific social
nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (1978, p. 80). Vygotsky examined the relationship between learning and development, which brought about a great change in the traditional manner of viewing children’s developmental process. He questioned the relationship between learning and development by exploring the multiplicity of learning: “Learning is more than the acquisition of the ability to think; it is the acquisition of many specialized abilities for thinking about a variety of things” (p. 77). He defined the zone of proximal development as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 78) The concept of the zone of proximal development considered children’s learning process as related to social factors. He also focused on the importance of sociocultural influences. Furthermore, the zone of proximal development held much educational significance, because, as he suggested, the heart of learning includes environmental aspects as well as the role of interaction among peers or other people in children’s learning. Vygotsky explains the role of instruction in children’s development as follows:

In the child’s development, on the contrary, imitation and instruction play a major role. They bring out the specifically human qualities of the mind and lead the child to new developmental levels. In learning to speak, as in learning school subjects, imitation is indispensable. . . . Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it: it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions. (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 188)

From this passage, we can deduce that Vygotsky assumed proper instruction could produce good learning, transcending children’s developmental level. After Vygotsky’s theory had
been utilized in various settings, it aroused interest in promoting children’s learning by looking at the potentiality of alternative ways of learning.

Vygotsky viewed social interaction and children’s active participation as being required for development to proceed. The role of the teacher is to re-create meaning through negotiation. Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development extended to the notion of scaffolding in the construction of children’s learning and knowledge. Even though Vygotsky did not use the term scaffolding directly, the importance of interaction and negotiation has been extended to educational settings. The term refers to providing the appropriate assistance to promote children’s learning. When adults give children help, especially when they encounter difficulties they cannot resolve by themselves, this relevant aid facilitates children’s learning. It challenges the traditional pedagogy and develops reciprocal teaching and the realm of alternative learning.

Vygotsky described the importance of sociocultural influences in relation to children’s learning in depth in his theory. He argued that the nature of human learning in the life of human beings was social rather than individual. According to Yuriv V. Karpov (2003), all specifically human mental processes (so-called higher mental processes) are mediated by psychological tools such as language, signs, and symbols. These tools are invented by human society, and they are acquired by children in the course of interpersonal communication with adults and more experienced peers. Having been acquired and internalized by children, these tools then function as mediators of the
children’s high mental processes. Vygotsky viewed school instruction as the major avenue for mediated learning. (p. 65)

In Vygotsky’s theory, development is viewed as the process of acquiring diverse cultural symbols mediated by external (social) to internal (individual) acquisition. According to Egan and Gajdamaschko (2003), “Vygotsky sees the mind as being a psychological and cultural organ, and the cognitive tools we learn as providing the educator with a focus of attention that can make better sense of the task before us” (p. 85). Among these psychological tools, Vygotsky emphasized language as primary among the tools of the mind. He assumed that the role of language is significant in the continuity of development. The language can be seen as a system of signs or a means of communication, but it can also be a tool of internalization of the mind. Because language is a means of dialogue to oneself, Vygotsky paid attention to social processes that are interiorized or internalized by using language.

**New paradigm of valuing cultural influences in children’s art**

During the latter part of the 20th century, art educators began to recognize the sociocultural influences in children’s drawings. Whereas earlier studies considered children’s artistic development as genetic, universal, and occurring in linear stages, more recent studies suggest that learning contexts influenced children’s artistic development, along with other societal and cultural factors. The tension between universal and nonuniversal developmental theories has continued, but many contradictory findings proving the importance of sociocultural influences on children’s art making have emerged.

With the universality of child development called into question, many researchers began reporting findings within other contexts. Numerous cross-cultural studies were conducted to illustrate how children are influenced by their society and culture differently in divergent contexts. Brent Wilson and Marjorie Wilson completed several cross-cultural studies that elucidated these dissimilarities, and they argued for the crucial necessity of
considering cultural influences to understand children’s artistic development (Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Wilson, 1977). Many other studies have illuminated various differences among cultures in children’s drawings. Kindler and Darras (1997) also challenged the existing developmental models by conducting cross-cultural research. They pointed to several problems with the stage model: the issue of diversity, the focus on realism (which is a Western way of creating art), the deficiency of generalization, and the overemphasis on psychology. The authors assumed that art was a means of communication and that children’s art was inclined to be adapted to their sociocultural surroundings.

Lars Lindstrom conducted another valuable cross-cultural study. Lindstrom (2000) investigated the variations in subject matter between Mongolian and Cuban children’s drawings. He found intriguing differences between the family orientation of the Mongolian children and the peer orientation of the Cuban children. In doing so, Lindstrom pointed to the complexity of understanding children’s visual narratives.

Having discussed various research studies that have considered the social and cultural influences on children, I next examine studies that have focused on interaction in children’s art making. Christine Thompson has focused on peer influences, along with adult or teacher influences, on children’s art learning. Thompson (1995) concentrated on the dialogue surrounding children’s art making, noting that “The presence of other children, the possibility of dialogue, the sharing of perspectives that inevitably occurs around the sketchbooks, contribute significantly to early artistic learning” (p. 9). What this passage makes clear is that children’s art-making process is an interdependent process of interaction with peers or adults. Because, for many years, children’s art making was regarded as a solitary act and a means of liberating and expressing feelings and emotions, her recognition of undiscovered dimensions of art learning is noteworthy. In addition, the role of the adult or teacher in the dialogue with children requires caution when responding to children’s drawings.
The last trend exploring alternatives to universal developmental theories has been in research conducted for children with special circumstances. Pariser (1997) researched the graphic development of exceptional children who were psychologically or neurologically impaired yet artistically advanced. Pariser stated, “Given the great expanse of human art making, it seems reasonable to assume that there exists a multiplicity of culturally favored representational systems” (p. 121). He questioned the place of realistic drawings, which are an ideal goal in developing artistic skills in Western societies, and he created a graphic developmental model in which he compared various cross-cultural examples and famous artists’ early drawings.

Taken together, although early studies considered children’s artistic development as genetic, universal, and linear, more recent studies have suggested that learning contexts influence children’s artistic development, along with societal and cultural factors. In addition, other researchers have argued that children’s drawings are constructed from various experiences, not as simple products (Kindler & Darras, 1997; Lindstrom, 2000; Thompson, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978; Wilson, 1988; Wilson & Wilson, 1977). Thus far, it is reasonable to conclude that the main weakness of universal developmental theory was its inability to explain all children’s artistic development; it did not consider children from different cultures or those with special needs, nor did it address sociocultural factors. Furthermore, it assumed that the end point of artistic development was realism, which is based on Western values in the arts (Wolf & Perry, 1988). Studies on cultural influences have been conducted primarily to illuminate differences between diverse cultures, as well as the role of relationships among children or environmental factors in artistic development. The recognition of children’s drawing as a means of universal expression has changed because of such research.
Changing notions of the idea of childhood

This section investigates reasons for the emerging interest in children in society in terms of the image of the child or childhood. Traditional views pursued the notion of the whole child; however, these established theories of child development have now been called into question. This progressive attitude is related to the work of scholars who believe in the importance of contextual influences.

Vygotsky's idea of sociocultural influences in relation to children’s learning has been actively studied. Vygotsky views children as constructing meaning through social interaction with others (Mahn, 1999). In contrast to the Rousseauian theory against the harmful power of society, the Vygotskian view regards the social environment as an essential system in which children can develop their cognitive ability. It also focuses on children as active learners who are negotiating learning and making meaning, rather than being passive learners.

Similarly, Corsaro (2005) describes the following historical structures of childhood: “(1) childhood constitutes a particular structural form; (2) childhood is exposed to the same societal forces as adulthood; and (3) children are themselves co-constructors of childhood and society” (p. 29). There is an emerging interest in childhood, and Corsaro raised the question of why childhood has not been studied in the field of sociology. The contemporary perspectives on childhood have taken two directions. First, the child is seen as an actual social being. This perspective emphasizes the role of childhood in daily life (and daily life in childhood) and further argues that children are living participants in society. Second, it calls into question existing structures in society and pursues social equity.

Some scholars in the field of early childhood education have focused on culture, based on the view of children as active participants in society. According to Daniel J. Walsh (2002),
Sixty years ago Vygotsky urged developmentalists to end the vain quest for “the eternal child.” He urged them to instead pursue “the historical child” (1934/1987, p. 91). The historical child does not transcend culture and history. As Minick put it, she learns and develops “under particular social and historical conditions” (1989, p. 162).

In arguing about the changing notion of the child, long-held beliefs in the eternal child are questioned. Lowenfeld and Read, as well as Piaget, based their theories on the ideal child as an eternal child, but these views of childhood and cognitive developmental theories in general have been questioned. The intriguing point in Walsh’s argument is that he focuses on the “historical child,” seeing the child for the purpose of understanding him or her, and valuing aspects of and the context of the child’s environment.

Consequently, recent changes in the view of the child and of childhood are noteworthy. First, the concept of the ideal child has been challenged and the notion of the historical child has emerged. This focuses on the children’s situation and further focuses on cultural factors in children’s growth. Moreover, although once neglected, children’s role has now been recognized and extended to the need to consider children active beings in society.

**Learning aspects and the progressive view toward art making**

As noted earlier, Vygotsky’s theories have been used to change fundamental beliefs toward children’s artistic development. Since researchers began actively using his idea of sociocultural learning, emphasis on the significance of environmental aspects and interaction in children’s artistic development has blossomed. In this section, I investigate progressive notions of learning and further examine the function of art making, with an emphasis on cultural factors.

To understand changing notions of learning, it is necessary to discuss the work of the American psychologist Jerome Bruner. Because space is limited, I have limited the
discussion to Bruner’s works on learning. Bruner had an interest in cultural psychology (Walsh, 2002) and was concerned with learning—how we acquire knowledge and the communicative context—and with the human process of cultural meaning making. He believed that human beings were greatly influenced by folk psychology and that it was ordinary for humans to keep learning. To quote Bruner (1990),

> Once young children come to grasp the basic idea of reference necessary for any language use—that is, once they can name, can note recurrence, and can register termination of existence—their principal linguistic interest centers on human action and its outcomes, particularly human interaction. . . . People and their actions dominate the child’s interest and attention. (p. 78)

From this quotation, we realize that Bruner placed importance on the role of culture and of context in learning.

Other interesting findings on children’s learning and socialization in actual classrooms have been reported (Dyson, 1989; Gallas, 1994; Paley, 1984). These studies were conducted by experienced classroom teachers or ethnographers over a long time, and all include extensive observations along with detailed dialogues that took place around the classroom. Because Bruner was concerned with the communicative context, including narratives, it is noteworthy that these studies focused on children’s individual understandings of the world through dialogues. For example, Gallas (1994) addressed the power of narrative thinking in her book chapter, “Making Thinking Visible.” She wrote that narrative uses “‘semantic innovation’ to take seemingly different and opposing experiences and synthesize them through the development of plot” (p. 79). This study also related to the Vygotskyan historical child, with its emphasis on the particular context. Gallas acknowledged that storytelling is an excellent way to structure children’s experiences to make sense of the world. She further argued in favor of the transformative character of art making and viewed art as
another form of storytelling. She considered the arts as tools for expansive expression, which functioned as a means for children to learn and as a form of communication:

Too often, when we think about appropriate ways to communicate what we know in schools, we think only of oral and written language. Even those children who are fluent speakers and writers, though they will be successful within those standards, are confined by that limitation. I now know, as Bakhtin (1986) points out, “if the word ‘text’ is understood in the broad sense—as any coherent complex of signs—then even the study of art . . . deals with texts” (p. 103). (Gallas, 1994, p. 112)

Accordingly, Gallas explored the broad dimension of learning and believed art and narrative thinking could be alternative ways of learning. In terms of art making, she considered the arts as both methods of learning and as expressive languages of communication. Because she investigated various forms of texts, it seems that Gallas regarded the arts as effective languages of learning to promote a better understanding of the world. She focused on contextual languages that made meaningful learning possible for children through the sharing of narratives.

In summary, art making has been seen as various means of learning in studies on the sociocultural influences in children’s art. First, in the field of art education, communicative practices have become important in understanding how children acquire cultural understandings through human interactions. For example, Tarr (1995) wrote,

The impact of external influences is usually discussed as it relates to the graphic forms, modes, or strategies which children adopt for their purposes of expression. These influences may become apparent as soon as children pass the scribbling stage of development. The influences related to the meaning, purposes, values, and assumptions about the art making process occur simultaneously with visual influences, and are transmitted through human interactions. (p. 23)
Furthermore, great numbers of studies have been conducted on children’s socialization process. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that in the latter part of the 20th century, children’s art making was viewed as communicative and as an alternative means of learning, along with an emphasis on cultural influences. Influenced by Vygotsky and Bruner, the notion of learning has expanded and challenges the traditional instruction of knowledge. It is interesting that the arts have come to be seen as a visual language and that the power of narratives in children’s learning has come to be valued.

**The Reggio Emilia approach: The idea of cooperative learning**

The Reggio Emilia approach has been executed successfully in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy, for more than 40 years. This approach has a number of distinguishing characteristics and serves as a progressive model for early childhood education. Reggio Emilia is a “community-based investigation to foster diverse learning opportunities” for children from a few months old to 6 years of age (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 2). It was begun by parents who cared about their children’s learning after World War II. Considering the fact that a Catholic education had dominated the whole of Italy, it was a unique experiment, not only in education outside the control of the Catholic Church, but also in the success of women’s rights in Reggio, as the women fought for institutions where they could leave their children under safe care for learning and development. It aimed to be a place for children based not on the intentions of adults or religion, but on diverse ways of learning, contextualizing knowledge, and interaction by experimenting through cooperative learning experiences. In contrast to earlier notions of learning, which regarded learning as an individual and isolated process, in the Reggio Emilia approach, learning was considered communicative and was based on the use of group work. In the realm of learning, Reggio Emilia educators believed that children acquired knowledge that was situated “in a context through a process of meaning making in continuous encounters with others and the world,
and the child and the teacher are understood as co-constructers of knowledge and culture” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 6).

The approach focuses on children’s symbolic representations to promote their learning. It is interesting how Reggio children investigate the environment and express their lived experiences through diverse languages, including the visual arts, music, drama, and play. These representational skills include the capability for graphic representation, which was underestimated for many years and which can evoke children’s intellectual ability to make sense of the world.

In this approach, children are strongly viewed as social beings, and importance is placed on relationships and interactions, with children as co-constructors of the culture. The very interesting part of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy is that relationships and interactions are emphasized, along with the collective experiences of learning. It also focuses on the process of exchange in dialogues; thus, the uniqueness of the approach is that the interaction is about something the children are really doing rather than about issues of concern to the teachers (Katz, 1993).

The Reggio Emilia approach has provoked impressive and progressive discussions of the ideas of childhood, learning, and children’s “hundred languages.” Moreover, it is meaningful that this approach has been implemented successfully because it challenged the constructed beliefs about learning and children. It has broadened the dimension of learning in its execution of cooperative learning and interdisciplinary learning and its emphasis on children’s diverse expressions of symbolic representations. I conclude this investigation of the Reggio Emilia pedagogy on relationships by quoting this statement by Carlina Rinaldi (2006):

Learning does not take place by means of transmission or reproduction. It is a process of construction, in which each individual constructs for himself the reasons, the
‘whys’, the meaning of things, others, nature, events, reality and life. The learning process is certainly individual, but because the reasons, explanations, interpretations and meanings of others are indispensable for our knowledge building, it is also a process of relations—a process of social construction. We thus consider knowledge to be a process of construction by the individual in relation with others, a true act of co-construction. (p. 125)

An important point to emphasize is that this approach has regarded children as being active in society, and children are carefully listened to. In this section, I have discussed the continuing examination of and changing beliefs about children’s art, with the recent recognition of previously ignored aspects of children’s art making.

Summary

Looking back on theories of child art, we can clearly see how child art has been interpreted in various ways and what has been valued in different time periods in terms of children’s learning. As we consider self-expressionism, we can see that the idea of child-centered learning was acted on ambiguously; it questioned who the child was and what was really concerned. In self-expressionism, which was based on psychology and scientific thought, children were characterized as natural beings, and the belief prevailed that children followed a linear process of development. At that time, the teachers’ role was to guide and protect children from society, and the role of art making was to balance their thoughts and minds.

Next, I investigated studies on the sociocultural influences on children’s art and learning. As contextual influences on children’s lives began to be considered, researchers began reconsidering the issues of development and learning. With changes in the view of
children as situated and active beings in society, traditional notions of learning and development became diversified. Children’s art has been considered an interactive process, and numerous research studies have been conducted in different cultures.

I addressed the changing notions of knowledge and visual languages and offered the example of the Reggio Emilia approach. Discussion of that pedagogical experiment further included a discussion of childhood and the pedagogy of listening and relationships (Rinaldi, 2006). As Malaguzzi (1993) explained for the hundred languages of children, art is a means of communication for children, a transmission process of sharing their experiences and thoughts. An investigation of new perspectives on studying children’s art is meaningful to elucidate the process by which children make meaning and interact with others.

**Theories of Bakhtin**

Sociocultural theories emphasize the role of context in children’s development and suggest that it is truly impossible to understand children’s drawings without context. However, only a small number of studies in art education have provided detailed accounts of the situated context in which children are making art. I have attempted to research children’s art-making process by looking at the context of their actions, interactions, and visually represented images. To provide a theoretical framework to study the discourses, communication, and actions that occur as children create visual arts, I borrow from Mikhail Bakhtin and other important scholars.

Bakhtin’s views on the dialogic relationships in language, characteristics of the novel, and formation of the ideological self and communication through discourses have gained interest across various academic disciplines. Bakhtin was interested in the status of knowing, subjectivity, situatedness, and so on throughout his life (Holquist, 1990). Because the study of dialogue is the essence of Bakhtin’s works, he also focused on shared communication in mediating human knowledge by using discourses, as well as the nature of language in the
existence of human beings. In this section, Bakhtin’s ideas on dialogism and on the function and nature of discourse in terms of making and communicating meanings are discussed. It is necessary to discuss Bakhtin’s ideas to investigate children’s meaning making through art and their systematic approach toward communication when creating art.

**Dialogism**

During Bakhtin’s life, he never defined the term *dialogism*, but after his death, his followers and later scholars used the term *dialogism* to explain Bakhtin’s theory of knowledge and his philosophy (Holquist, 1990). The idea of dialogism refers to the view that all languages and other communication systems relate to their special contexts in the past, present, and future. When Bakhtin places languages in a historical and social context, he claims that any utterance is related to the utterances of the community. In any utterance, traces of earlier utterances and the source of future utterances in the social sphere can be found. The dialogic nature of languages and other communication systems refers to the view that all the voices are connected. These voices are continually communicating with other discourses from past, present, and future utterances and through intertextual relationships within and among texts.

Bakhtin was also concerned with the interactive nature of utterances, placing emphasis on the context and active process of meaning making in human communication. According to Bakhtin (1986),

> Our speech, all our utterances (including creative works), are filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of “our-own-ness,” varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate. (p. 89)
Likewise, Bakhtin argues that meaning is socially produced as an event. He also views the structure of speech as unstable and dynamic rather than as the fixed generation of a certain meaning.

**The Unfinalized Self**

To understand the meaning of communication, it is important to conceive of the context. The situation of the dialogue embraces the surroundings in which the dialogue occurred, the individuality and background of the speakers, and the outer sources of information and experience that the speakers draw on during the dialogue.

To understand another person’s utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance we are in the process of understanding, we lay down a set of our own words as we answer. The greater their number and weight, the deeper and more substantial our understanding will be. Any true understanding is dialogic in nature. Understanding is to the utterance as one line of a dialogue is to the next (Voloshinov, 1973, p. 102).

From this point of view, individuals are involved in actively negotiating their understanding and communication of meanings produced in each specific context. The traditional concept of communication regarded information as being passed from a sender to a receiver; however, Bakhtin views the receiver as having a more active role and emphasizes the live action that occurs during the communication process.

Dialogic relationships are intrinsic and unparalleled in actual dialogues, which formulate relationships and produce meanings. Bakhtin (1981) viewed the nature of the dialogue as a manifold occurrence: “a dialogue is composed of an utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two” (p. 38). The essence of dialogues is how meaning has been created and communicated. In the essay “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin (1981) claims that all kinds of discourse are “oriented toward an understanding that is ‘responsive’” (p. 280). This
is one of his core ideas: that the meaning of any utterance, whether spoken or written, can be understood only in a particular context and “against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme” (p. 281).

**Ideological Becoming**

Ideological becoming refers to the process of making sense of the world and to generating ways of seeing. Similar to Vygotsky in using a larger frame to see the process of socialization, Bakhtin was concerned with how individuals are functioning and becoming in a social context. Vygotsky’s semiotic mediation and Bakhtin’s ideological becoming are similar in their view of the internalization of culture. It is similar to Vygotsky’s idea of inner speech, but Bakhtin investigates the inner dialogism further through the notion of ideological becoming.

Bakhtin views ideological becoming as occurring in an “ideological environment”: “Human consciousness does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world” (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 6). The ideological environment is the place of our everyday lives, where different individuals intervene in ideological becoming. It could be the place of the classroom, the community, or our personal surroundings (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Bakhtin (1981) perceived taking other voices in the environment as critical to ideological development: “Another’s discourse performs here [in ideological becoming] no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth—but strives to determine the very basis of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior” (p. 342). Bakhtin examined social interactions, which are crucial in personal growth, and he thought the moment of miscommunication was an excellent opportunity to learn the idea about the ideological environment and history. In his view, in the ongoing dialogic process, the miscommunication event takes longer to proceed toward understanding one event. He
wrote, “Our ideological development is . . . an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values” (p. 346).

Throughout various interactions and struggles in the communication of children, they are ideologically becoming and making meaning through constant communication. As Bakhtin noted, social interaction is the best way to encourage one’s learning, and children are taking other voices in their becoming in the ideological environment and making sense of the world. Thus, it is not exceptional for the voices of others to have a function in children’s art-making process.

In the field of education, Bakhtin’s ideas have the potential for significant applications in terms of the responsivity and multivoicedness of utterances: “These two ideas are particularly significant for the attempts that are being made to situate knowing and coming to know in the co-construction of meaning that takes place in discourse that is truly dialogic” (Wells, 2001, p. 185). Likewise, the role of discourses has recently gained more recognition in the construction of knowledge, enhancing our understanding of knowledge. Once again, what needs to be emphasized, along with the continuous intentionality in making meaning and speaking, is the importance of contextuality in grasping meaning in communication, with the view that the construction of knowledge is a dynamic meaning-making process (Wells, 2001).

The Bakhtinian perspective of ideological becoming refers to “how we develop our way of viewing the world, our system of ideas, what Bakhtin calls an ideological self” (Freedman & Ball, 2004, p. 5). He regards ideological becoming as an inner process of understanding and perceiving reality.

Bakhtin argues for the importance of context and situation—how and where the meaning is produced—and focuses on the challenges of disabled interpretation of meaning in
the absence of context. Moreover, Bakhtin discusses the perpetual circulation of citations of words in the dialogue of human beings, and he analyzes the nature of communication by looking at the structure and formation of utterances.

**Intersubjectivity**

Ragnar Rommetviet (1979) defined intersubjectivity as follows:

The basic problem of human intersubjectivity becomes . . . a question concerning in what sense and under what conditions two persons who engage in a dialogue can transcend their different private worlds. And the linguistic basis for this enterprise, I shall argue, is not a fixed repertory of shared “literal” meanings, but very general and partially negotiated drafts of contracts concerning categorization and attribution inherent in ordinary language. (Wertsch, 1998, p. 112)

Intersubjectivity means the inseparable relationship between the self and other. It refers to the shared understanding made from the social world, which is a crucial feature in human communication.

One can clearly see that the individual and social aspects are strongly interrelated. Wertsch (1998) views intersubjectivity as a major concept in “intermental” social action. Intersubjectivity refers to the way in which individuals relate to each other when social interaction happens. Intersubjectivity is one of the main facets of human communication.

The concept of intersubjectivity helps each individual to understand certain words spoken by others and to comprehend events. Because the context is always fluid, the agents (children) are actively trying to understand each other. Intersubjectivity refers to the fact that children can mutually share or hold something in common.

First, there is the immediate, albeit unconventional, sense of *interpersonal communion* (Buber, 1958; Marcel, 1950; Stern, 1985) within and between persons who mutually attend and attune to one another’s emotive states and expressions. Second, there is the more conventional sense of *joint attention* to objects of reference in a shared domain of extra-linguistic or linguistic conversation (Habermas, 1970; Stout, 1903/1915), for example, found by Tomasello (1988) to play a critical role in early language development. This is intersubjectivity in the triangular sense of subject–subject–object *relatedness and aboutness* (Hobson, 1993a) in a shared world of object reference and manipulation. Third, there is the first- and second-person reflective and recursive intersubjectivity in the sense of communicative understanding mediated by (meta)representations, including symbolic references to actual and fictional worlds of imagination or joint pretence, for example, by the 2-year-old’s declaring ‘I a Daddy’ (Dunn & Dale, 1984). The capability to draw inferences about intentions, beliefs and feelings in others (Gopnik & Meltzoff, 1997)—probably evoked when communicative understanding is perturbed, and certainly in attempting or discerning deception—indicates a second-order mode. (p. 1)

Likewise, interpersonal engagement in dialogues and mediated representations in the social context are important to understand how children make meaning, because Bakhtin views communication as an active process of meaning making. Searching for the intersubjectivity in shared acts and shared meaning is valuable for studying children’s language and process of visual acquisition in the social context.

**Children’s Art Making as Visual Utterances**

An utterance is defined as the expression in words of ideas, thoughts, and feelings. However, the utterance implies the context of responses to dialogues and communication in various forms of languages and other cultural tools. I explore Bakhtin’s notion of the
dialogical nature of communication and borrow his idea of the utterance in researching children’s interaction through art making, based on which children are assumed to be negotiating and making art in reciprocal ways.

Bakhtin’s theory is particularly valuable to this investigation because it makes the mutual aspects of children’s interaction and communication more visible as they engage in reciprocating the utterances of others. It is common to assume that children’s art making is a solitary process in which they internalize their thoughts and feelings. However, children are constantly talking and interacting in the process of art making within a given context. From this perspective, children’s art making is composed of multiple layers of interaction and communication. In other words, children use art in various ways, not only as individual mediation, but also as a social and communicative cultural tool. Communication in children’s art making can be largely categorized into two types: (1) inner communication (or communication to an audience of self or the imaginary), which is quiet conversation, as represented in their artistic products; and (2) outer communication (communication to an audience of social intermediaries), which can be classified as their interaction and dialogues while making art. These correspond to Vygotsky’s ideas of social action and individual process in terms of “intermental” and “intramental” functioning:

Any function in the child’s cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition. . . . It goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among people
genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships. (Wertsch, 1998, p. 110)

One can clearly see that the individual and social aspects are strongly related to each other.

Furthermore, Wertsch (1998) viewed intersubjectivity as a major concept in intermental social action. The notion of intersubjectivity is one of the main facets of human communication. It refers to mutual understandings through knowledge sharing or problem solving. In the moment of communication, two or more different positions work together. In effective communication, intersubjectivity involves intricate dialectics to resolve each of the speakers’ own perspectives. Thus, it is meaningful to look at Bakhtin’s idea that discourses are acclimatized to reactive comprehension, even though the listener may not grasp the exact meaning delivered by other people.

The second major facet of social interaction is alterity (Wertsch, 1998). This term refers to the dialogism of texts in terms of multivoicedness. As Bakhtin observed in the formation of meanings by looking at double-voiced discourses, the perpetual interaction between meanings and their interpretation should be considered context as well. In examining the concept of alterity when researching children’s art, I included how others functioned and served to influence children’s art making. According to Clark and Holquist (1984), “Bakhtin conceives of otherness as the grounds of all existence and of dialogue as the primal structure of any particular existence, representing a constant exchange between what is already and what is not yet” (p. 65).

Summary

A dialogic process that is dynamic and fluid depends on the participants’ exchanges of dialogues and perceptions. Bakhtin investigated the relationship between the self and others as seen in time and space (Holquist, 1990). In dialogism, the multiplicity of human perception is an underlying concept: If we see the same event together, each of us will
perceive something different. This approach toward unique cognitive perception has been extended to the notion of multiple existences of self in terms of the unfinalized self.

The concept of the self–other relationship is essential to understand the notions of dialogism and intersubjectivity, and further, to understand the communicational aspects of children’s art-making process. It is also derived from the concept of ideological becoming in relation to looking at the function of others in children’s early learning and communication process.

Ideological becoming means the way we shape our perspectives and beliefs in the social context. The ideological surroundings are the place where we are developing our senses in a particular society as we accept diverse norms, beliefs, values, and ideas. It could be the classroom, community, or anywhere we live and that we deal with in our everyday lives (Freedman, 2004). According to Bakhtin (1981), “our ideological development is . . . an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values” (p. 346). Bakhtin views social interaction as the best way to develop our ideological self. From this point of view, the roles of others are crucial to understand the core of learning.

There are multiple ways the self–other relationship functions in children’s artistic experiences. The next section investigates previous studies on the communicative aspects of child art based on an examination of the development of the dialogic self in visual art-making experiences.

**Communicative Aspects in the Creation of Art**

In previous writings in this chapter, I presented a theoretical framework on children’s art making and discussed the changing notions of children’s art making in relation to learning and the idea of childhood. Further, I extended the discussion on the dialogic nature of utterances and communication by referring to the writings of Bakhtin. In this section, I
address the communicative aspects of children’s art making from the perspective that the visual arts are used as living cultural tools to facilitate children’s communication.

**Children’s Visual Arts as Visual Languages**

One of the most persuasive illustrations that children use visual art as a living cultural tool can be seen in the forms of graphic representation associated with the Reggio Emilia approach. The Reggio Emilia approach views art as one of multiple representations, referred to as the hundred languages, to symbolize children’s words and thoughts. Malaguzzi (1998) explains how children use graphic representation to facilitate their communication:

> The question of transferring words into graphic representation is not simple because it involves making strong selections. In moving past the flood of spoken words, the children have to say no to many thoughts to which they might be emotionally attached. Sometimes they will need to pause in order to clarify ideas before putting them down on paper and making them visible to others. Putting ideas into the form of graphic representation allows the children to understand that their actions can communicate. This is an extraordinary discovery because it helps them realize that in order to communicate, their graphic must be understandable to others. In our view, graphic representation is a tool of communication much simpler and clearer than words. (pp. 91–92)

Here, children refine, organize, and transform their ideas, symbols, and feelings through their selection of images and their graphic representations. From this point of view, children’s graphic representations become powerful communicative tools to address their ideas through a mediation process. It is more inclusive to consider many possible ways to give youngsters the opportunity to investigate their world because existing and established pedagogy has focused on limited subjects, such as literacy development. For example, visual art is one unit of multiple representations to promote children’s learning, and the educators in the Reggio
Emilia approach value the idea that art gives young children who have not developed their vocabulary the opportunity to communicate their ideas. In creating graphic representations, children actively share their process and transform the information.

In a similar fashion, the research by Andrezczak, Trainin, and Poldberg (2005) investigates the effect of creating visual art in relation to the acquisition of symbol systems and language development. In the paper “From Image to Text: Using Images in the Writing Process,” these scholars explored the creation of visual art in relation to reading and writing, as well as the process of mediating between the mind and the world. Vygotsky believed that children acquire the symbol systems of a particular culture in a process of “semiotic mediation” (Mahn, 1999, p. 343), and this research is in accordance with Vygotsky’s view of art in early childhood as a form of prewriting. In looking at children’s art making that has been interpreted as visual languages, the genuineness with which children use certain symbols and learn something in their own way is clear.

Children use art in various ways (Malaguzzi, 1993), not only as individual mediation, but also as social and cultural communicative tools. The visual arts serve diverse roles in children’s cognitive learning, not only as entry points, but also as a prolonged process of insightful learning. Another fact of note is that if we were to investigate children’s group work in art making by zooming in on the interactive process, it would be fascinating to look at richer layers of “the interdependence of individual and social processes in the co-construction of knowledge” (Mahn, 1999, p. 347).

Accordingly, visual arts have functioned to broaden children’s means of communication. The idea of visual language has been used in the Reggio Emilia approach as the concept of the graphic language—a part of children’s symbolic representation—to promote learning (Katz, 1993). In their everyday lives, children make art to express and record their emotions, thoughts, and reflections of the world. Researchers value children’s
symbolic representations through art, which offers a process of mediation. From this point of view, visual art pertains to each child in providing a mediation process by which children internalize their ideas and thoughts through the selection and creation of representations. At the same time, their visual representations function as a cultural tool to communicate in a certain community.

**Children’s Talk and Art Making as an Interactive Process**

Theories of child art continue to provide further understanding of children’s art-making process. Cox (2005) insists that children’s drawings have definite aims, and that children have a strong desire to achieve these aims. In a yearlong observation in a nursery school setting, she observed focal students and found that children were aware that their drawings had the capability of representing and expressing their thoughts and their ability to make art. She saw the drawings as “part of children’s broader, intentional, meaning-making activity” (p. 115). Through communicative means and children’s processes of intelligence, their drawings played an active role in their thinking, understanding, and meaning making about their experiences and the world.

It is interesting that Cox viewed children’s drawings as an ongoing process of representational thinking, related to other events and activities in specific contexts: “When we pay attention to children’s representational purposes we can see the talk as part of the broader activity that is taking place when children are drawing” (Cox, 2005, p. 122). Unlike in traditional research, which has been concerned with the form of children’s drawings, Cox studied their content and use. Moreover, she argued that when children explained their drawings, their talk had the additional functions of developing or nullifying meanings:

When a child is including, or excluding, features of the world in a drawing and when they are encoding and decoding intentions in their drawings in a playful and
on-going way, they are experimenting with the language of materials and marks
and building concepts at the same time. (p. 122)

In this sense, children’s art functions as a visual language. As children are making art, they
are building and recalling their experiences. She found that this talk and the drawing could
not be separated and that they formed a “mutually transformative process” (Cox, 2005, p.
123).

Taken together, children’s art-making process is a social practice. From this point of
view, it is reasonable to study children’s art-making process by approaching it from multiple
perspectives to comprehend what they want to draw and why they include certain information.
By understanding children’s art making, we can infer their thinking processes and understand
what they want to stress through their art and how they make sense of their world.

Summary

In the history of studies on children’s art, children’s art-making process has long
focused on their psychological or social functioning. Children’s art has traditionally been
regarded as a monologue in visual texts; however, their art making is actually complicated,
with several levels of expression and discourse. Children’s art making is a complicated
process, constituting the dynamic mediation of various layers of cultural meaning systems in
terms of multiple layers of discourses and multiple visual languages. When children create art,
they are making their voices heard in various ways through dialogue and visual
representation in responding to the situation and by interacting with others. The mediated
symbolic representation itself could be the result of social communication. From this point of
view, art making reflects a dynamic process of externalization and internalization of
negotiated meanings as “the space of authoring” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998,
p. 169). Thus, it is meaningful to study how children’s visual language functions as a
mechanism of socialization and to investigate the art-making process in systematic ways.
(Kindler & Darras, 1997; Tarr, 1995; Thompson, 1995). Furthermore, by investigating the communicative aspects of children’s art making, this study focuses not only on children’s art as a visual language system, but also on children’s actual art making by emphasizing their actions in everyday life. In studying the communicative aspects of children’s art-making process, I discuss how texts—specifically, the visual texts and exemplars of children’s art I examine—mediate between action and discourse in children’s art-making process; in the use of art, children sometimes deliver their intention by creating images in response to specificities of the context. Thus, this research is intended to expand or broaden the realm of understanding of children’s art making by searching specifically for the communicative aspects of meaning making.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodologies and research process, including a description of the research site, methods used in data generation, and data analysis. It discusses how the methods were selected to study children’s communication through the arts and how the research was conducted, from gaining access, to choosing participants, to other data-generation situations. Later, I explain how the data were analyzed.

Qualitative Research Methods

This research is an investigation into how children interact with each other and with other contexts that may not be visible at first, and how they build up communicative experiences through visual art making in an early childhood classroom. This study was intended to explore the dynamics of communication in children’s art-making process. Qualitative research methods were used to understand these social phenomena.

According to Glesne (2006), “Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural–political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (p. 4). These methods include contextualizing, interpreting, understanding, and reflecting on specific social phenomena, whereas quantitative research aims at generalizing findings from specific circumstances. Qualitative research is aimed at a naturalistic setting, in which the researcher acts as the interpretive instrument to find meanings, and the research is presented in a form that is expressive and highly detailed. It requires a holistic perspective to approach participants from multiple angles, which preserves the complexities of human behavior. As the research instrument, I investigated children’s communication through art
with a critical eye, to observe what was really occurring during children’s art-making process as I participated at the research site (Glesne, 2006).

In the early years, research in the area of communication focused primarily on language development. According to Bornstein (2000), “children quite obviously progress very far very fast in acquiring the complete and complex communication and symbol system that is language; in doing so the child is clearly neither ill-equipped nor alone” (p. 110). Bornstein also stated that children are responsive to various kinds of information and resources surrounding them. From this perspective, communication is acquired through multiple channels of information experienced by the children themselves, as well as through parental influences and cultural factors. Hence, to understand children’s early communication through art from multiple perspectives, I take multiple approaches, namely, conducting interviews with children, parents, and teachers, and observing classrooms. This study includes an investigation of children’s narratives and their reflections on their aesthetic experiences. Several kinds of interactions occur around art-making activities (Cox, 2005). Regarding the current research, I propose that art making depends greatly on its communicative aspects.

To obtain a holistic perspective on children’s lives with “manifold richness” (Graue & Walsh, 1998, p. 22), it is valid to study the communicative aspects of children’s art making by using various qualitative research methods. Because I investigated children’s art-making process in holistic ways, it was reasonable to use multiple qualitative research methods to examine the process in context. To understand children’s acquisition of visual languages as multiple layers of responses to people and the environment, it was appropriate to use qualitative research methods.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), “the researcher enters into the lives of the participants. This brings a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues that do not
attend quantitative approaches” (p. 66). The issues can be categorized into those on the technical side, which address entry into the site and efficiency in terms of the researcher’s role, and those on the interpersonal side, which capture the ethical and personal dilemmas that arise during the course of a study. One of the unique features of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary agent for collecting data, observing participants, and interpreting phenomena in the field (Glesne, 2006). To understand the lives of participants, I observed focal students from different angles, including a large group activity, a small group activity, peer-to-peer interaction, and occasional brief interviews with the child. In addition, I observed teachers and interviewed teachers and parents to understand the students better. With the data generated from these multiple sources, I carefully looked at what the children vocalized about the forms of visual art they created and how they visualized their creations. In addition, various forms of communicative signs were gathered to comprehend children’s art-making process.

**Gaining Entry**

According to Glesne (2006),

> Access is a process. It refers to your acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes. (p. 44)

Before finding the research site, I compiled a list of preschools in the local area, as advised by my colleagues in early childhood education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. They had supervised student teachers in this area, so they knew various programs and shared information about the early childhood programs in the city. Using the list of possible and recommended research sites, I began to contact schools one by one.
Because I was conducting research in a city a long distance from Penn State University, it was challenging to find a site, even though Urbana-Champaign is a university town. Mostly, my trial in finding a site was hindered in the line of the director. Even before I made an appointment with the director, a few schools were not enthusiastic about having a researcher in the program. This was likely because they expected a researcher from the University of Illinois or because they did not like the presence of a researcher in their program if the program could be looked at negatively. When I explained the reason I wanted to make an appointment to see the director, they asked if I was a University of Illinois student. In addition, I simultaneously wanted to avoid schedule conflicts with my previous colleagues in the same school or the same classroom because my colleagues had collected data in a certain number of schools already. Because University of Illinois is well-known for the use of qualitative research methodologies, there was no doubt that many schools in this city had already experienced the inclusion of a researcher. Thus, it was difficult to find a school in the city that had a good reputation and that had not had a researcher in the classroom prior to the time I was generating data.

However, I found one school that was interested in my study. When I first met the director, Nancy (a pseudonym), she was curious about how I had heard of the program. I explained that I had heard the program had a good reputation, so I wanted to do research in the school. My colleagues and friends with children had mentioned that this school was one of the parents’ favorites in this city. The director inquired about my research plan and purposes, and she agreed to allow me to conduct research in the school. She also wanted to obtain a reference letter from my advisor to check my identity. After talking with her, I was introduced to the head teacher of the preschool classroom, Emily (a pseudonym). I wondered what the head teacher would think of my being in her classroom, so I mentioned to the director, “I hope the head teacher will like having me in her classroom.” Surprisingly, the
director responded, “Because I have given permission for you to do research in this school, the teacher can’t say anything. It’s my decision to give permission to do research in the school.” I was surprised at this comment, but I followed the director to meet Emily, the head teacher in the prekindergarten classroom. As Glesne (2006) noted, “gaining acceptance at the top is also risky because others may feel ordered to cooperate or may think that you are somehow politically aligned with one of several factions” (p. 44). I considered how the head teacher might react to me. Fortunately, Emily welcomed me from the moment we met, but I was not sure if I could build rapport with her in the given situation. I asked if she would be willing to participate in my research, and she agreed.

I handed my research proposal and the letter of invitation to Emily and the director, to provide a detailed explanation of the research. It seemed that the director wanted children to have more opportunity to make art in the school, and she indicated that I could do whatever I wanted in the classroom in making art. I explained that I wanted to observe a setting that was as naturalistic as possible, so I expressed my intention to observe the classroom as it was at first. Permission was obtained from the director and the teacher in early August 2008. After obtaining their permission, I began to work out the Institutional Review Board proposal. It took several months to obtain approval from the Research Protection Office at Penn State University. As soon as the approval had arrived from the Institutional Review Board office, I contacted the school to inform them I could begin my research. In addition, I negotiated my visits with the head teacher, and we agreed that I should visit the classroom three times per week over a period of 3 months.

Research Site

In this study, I chose one branch of the Nobel learning school (also a pseudonym) based on its reputation within the local community. The school is located in a suburban area of the city. Although the Nobel learning school, which is located in a middle- to
upper-class community in this area, is a franchised institution that is operated across several states in the United States, it has gained a good reputation in the community because of the fact that this particular school places great emphasis on learning. It is a private educational program that includes children from infancy, to preschool providing full time program, to middle school offering after school.

My first impression of the school was that it was very clean and well maintained. In the entrance, it had security locks so strangers could not gain access to the children. The school building was a ranch style, with only one floor. There were six classrooms, the director’s office, a kitchen, a break room (which had copy machines and other school supplies), and the lobby. The classrooms for infants were located close to the entrance. The classrooms for prekindergarten children were located on the innermost side. A playground was located outside, with fancy outdoor gyms. It had sand on the ground, many outside toys, and almost brand new large plastic structures. In the hallway, children’s artwork was exhibited seasonally. This school was composed of six large classrooms: infant 1 and 2, infant 3, beginner, intermediate, toddler, and prekindergarten/after-school program. The infant programs had children from 6 weeks to 1 year of age in three different rooms. The infant programs required children to be enrolled for full days, but the other age levels accepted children for half-day programs. The reason they had three different rooms was that they needed more space to place cribs for infants and babies in the program. Because of the good condition of the school facilities, the infant rooms looked inviting to parents and visitors. The toddler program was for children from 1 to 2 years of age. Children from 2 to 3 years of age enrolled to the beginner program. The intermediate program hosted children from 3 to 4 years of age. The prekindergarten program had children from 4 to 5 years of age. This program ran a full daycare system for young children, and the number of students enrolled was
approximately 100. Usually, each classroom had two or three teachers to facilitate the youngsters’ education, and there was one head teacher and an assistant teacher in each classroom. In the academic year when I visited the school for my research, a few teachers had left and the school was struggling to survive with substitute teachers.

The classroom I chose was a prekindergarten classroom for a mixed-age group of 4- and 5-year-olds. Researching 4- and 5-year-old children was appropriate for studying children’s early communication through the arts. Because I wanted to research children’s communication in the process of making visual art, it seemed better to choose a classroom for 4- and 5-year-olds because many of the younger children did not verbalize. In the prekindergarten stages in this school, the aim was to emphasize both learning and play. Because I intended to research children’s communication during the art-making process, studying children in this naturalistic setting seemed to be more valid than conducting research in an art-focused program might have been.

The class was composed of approximately 20 children. The classroom had had increases and decreases in the student population, but most of the students remained for one academic year. The student population was composed of mostly white Caucasians, with a few African Americans, Asian Indians, and Hispanic students. However, the twin cities of Urbana-Champaign are affiliated with the university, and even though the majority of students in the classroom seemed to be white, the class was composed of children of various nationalities and backgrounds. The head teacher, Emily, had grown up and lived in this city for her entire life. Another teacher, Gail (a pseudonym), who was born in India, had lived in the United States for 25 years and had taught preschool children for more than 11 years. There was also one student teacher, Amy (a pseudonym), an undergraduate student in the Early Childhood Education Department from the University of Illinois. Amy was completing her second semester of student teaching in this classroom.
She was in the classroom on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from August to early December 2007. She assumed responsibility for the classroom for 1 month, using her own theme. However, while I was waiting for permission from the Research Protection Office, she was completing her teaching, so there were no schedule conflicts. At the time she was leaving this classroom, I was gradually beginning my research. It was a joyous experience to watch her teaching, because it reminded me of my student teaching experiences 4 years earlier. Moreover, she applied the project approach in her own way, step by step, and the children really loved her.

After receiving permission from the Research Protection Office on October 30, 2007, I completed a few weeks of observation to help me develop an understanding of the students. The school opened at around 7:00 a.m. and closed at 6:00 p.m. The prekindergarten class officially started at 8:30 a.m. and finished at 5:45 p.m. However, before or after this official classroom schedule, the students stayed in other classrooms with children of other age groups. As stated earlier, the school ran a full-day daycare system for the young children, but it also provided an aftercare system for older children. Among my participants were two children who had older siblings, and their siblings participated in the after-school program. For this program, one large classroom was divided into two, with the prekindergarten classroom located at the entrance and another section, which was located in the corner, being used for the after-school program for elementary school children. When it was approaching time to go home, children in these two classrooms gathered to watch videos, usually on Friday or on other rainy or snowy days when they could not go outside.

**PreKindergarten Daily Classroom Schedule**

Below is the daily routine for the prekindergarten classroom:

8:30–9:00 Sparks
9:00–9:30 Recess
9:30–10:00 Snack/Bathroom Break
10:00–10:30 Morning Circle Time
10:30–11:30 Guided Centers
11:30–12:00 Lunch
12:00–12:30 Cleanup/Bathroom Break
12:30–2:30 Nap Time
2:00–2:30 Book Time
2:30–3:00 Snack
3:00–3:30 Afternoon Circle Time
3:30–4:00 Recess
4:00–5:45 Cleanup

In the time designated for Sparks, children moved to their classroom from other classrooms. As soon as they arrived, they put their belongings into their cubbies, children’s cabinets, and gathered around their teacher. They came to one of the boards to check if they would be helpers on that day; these students were named the star helpers. These kinds of helpers included teachers’ helpers, chair helpers, book helpers, line leaders, calendar helpers, pledge helpers, light helpers, snack helpers, and pet helpers. Some of the helping jobs were very popular in the classroom. During Sparks time, the students individually got accustomed to the classroom by playing quietly. A few centers were open during this time. The book center and writing center were accessible to all students at that time. Next, students had recess time; they would usually go outside to play in the playground if the weather allowed. If the circumstances were too bad to take students outdoors, the teachers would set up several activities on the tables, usually toys, blocks, and puzzles. They rotated students so that all the students could experience the activities they had planned. After recess, the children had a
snack and bathroom break. If some children finished their snacks earlier, they were asked to move to the book center. During circle time, the teachers explained the themes in the unit plan and introduced what they were going to do on that day. This also included the calendar time and the introduction of helpers. I usually visited this classroom for the morning circle time and guided centers. It was helpful to observe their circle time to listen to each student’s reaction to the teachers. In the morning circle time, after the calendar time, when the students learned the date and weather for the day, the Pledge of Allegiance was a regular routine in the classroom:

> I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. (spoken together)

Whenever they were practicing the Pledge of Allegiance, one volunteer would hold a large flag of the United States. Among other jobs, this job was popular, and the volunteer would swing the flag proudly during this time. The unique aspect of this Pledge was that, of the five prekindergarten classrooms I had observed in the local area, this was the first time I had observed the practice of saying the Pledge of Allegiance in a prekindergarten classroom. I was very curious about this routine of practicing the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States, and I asked Emily why she included the pledge to the flag in the routine of the prekindergarten classroom. She said she wanted to help children succeed in school later (interview, Emily, November 2007). She thought they would need to learn it eventually, so it was better to learn it in their early years. After the Pledge of Allegiance, they sometimes had story time, and they usually went to the guided centers. The teachers explained to the children what they were going to do during this guided activity time. In the guided center time, I took a table and did art projects with selected children. I also gave other children the opportunity
to participate in the art projects; however, I focused on my selected participants in terms of recording their actions and talk during their art-making process.

**Classroom Environments**

Around the whiteboard, there were several sentences emphasizing learning: “This is our classroom. We are here to learn.” The classroom was divided into several categories of learning: Reading, Art, Science, Dramatic Play, Manipulative, Construction, and Sensory. Each category of learning included its own objectives. For example, the aim of Art was for developing creativity and vocabulary while exploring labels, shapes, space, and patterns linked to learning. Short descriptions of each category of learning were stated as hanging in the ceiling on the white hardboard.

When I began my observation, it was clear that the theme of the classroom was about fall. I could easily see many art activities that had been done with autumn leaves. For instance, I saw several papers in students’ cabinets with leaves traced by rubbing crayons. On the wall, I could see decorations of shaped and cut autumn leaves painted with watercolors. It was obvious that the tree trunk part was made by the teachers. Next to the autumn tree were 17 apples patterned by the teacher and decorated by the students.

Likewise, in the early observation period, the classroom seemed to have a few art activities, but they were limited in the sense that they decorated the classroom or showed what the students had learned in this classroom. During the weeks I spent as a nonparticipant observer to understand the students in the classroom, I seldom saw children’s art making as a separate unit, and it was clear that the head teacher had not planned various art activities separately. At that moment, I was unhappy because I did not see what I wanted. I had a short conversation with Emily. She sometimes said, “I’m sorry we didn’t have art today,” but even much later, she did not plan other art lessons. Later, Emily told me that she wanted to change jobs, so it seemed that she was not a very enthusiastic teacher at that time. She did an art
lesson once in terms of mixing colors to teach the primary colors and the secondary colors, but the aim of most of the other art lessons was to hang them on the wall. While I struggled with this situation, in which I could not see many art activities made by children in the classroom, I seriously considered changing the research site to a more art-focused program. It was a challenging moment in my research.

However, my intention was to research children’s communication during the art-making process, and studying children in naturalistic settings would be more valid than conducting research in an art-specialized program. The reason I avoided an art-specialized program was that the focus of my research was not on a gifted setting, but on a natural and common setting that we can easily access in the classroom. I intended to observe children’s interactions with others, such as teachers, friends, and the school environment, during the usual class, with my focus being on the communicative aspects of art making. The purpose of these observations of children’s daily lives in the school setting was to understand how they learned the arts as socialization and communicative tools to interact with each other. In addition, I was unsure whether I could wait another 3 months to obtain Institutional Review Board permission to change the research site.

Thus, I talked with Emily, and she told me I could do whatever I wanted to teach the arts. While I struggled with this situation, one of my friends told me that because of my research subject—the communicative and interactive realm of children’s art making—this would be a great opportunity to plan many art activities. In reality, researchers hardly ever have the opportunity to do whatever they want. I began to plan art activities, but I limited my role to that of a guide or helper in managing the art activities. I performed as a guide to prepare the art materials and manage the art table, but I was careful not to overwhelm the participants. Mainly, to observe participants’ interaction and communication, I did not speak too much but responded to them when they needed or asked me.
Selection of Participants

Before generating data, I negotiated with the teachers regarding my routine and data-collection strategy of using audio, video, and camera devices in the classroom. As soon as I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board committee at Penn State, I informed the director and teachers that my research was approved, and I obtained the teachers’ consent (see Appendix). I then planned to send a consent letter directly to the parents, but Emily told me that I should first show the consent letter for the parents to the director. As Emily expected, the director wanted to look over the letter, which took more than one additional week; it seemed that all kinds of letters to the parents needed the director’s approval. Finally, the director’s approval of those letters was granted, and she kept copies of the consent letters that was sent to the parents. I sent out the consent letters, which included a letter inviting them to participate in the research in which I introduced myself as the researcher, explained the purposes of the research, and included the consent form (see Appendix).

Sadly enough, none of the letters were returned to me at first, which was very disappointing for me at that time. The problem was that I did not see most parents because I visited the classroom in the middle of the day. I met only a few parents who dropped off their children late. I tried to be friendly and invite parents through the consent letters, but I assumed the parents may have been overwhelmed by the fact that they were going to be interviewed by me several times if they participated in the project. Because I did not receive any letters back from parents, I changed my recruiting strategy. Because by then I had observed these students for nearly 3 weeks, I decided to choose approximately 3 students as focal students, based on their consistent participation in art activities during times when that choice was available. My first choice was made by observing the twin brothers Daniel and Edward. These two children were always drawing and making something, and they liked to talk about what they made. They also made a few drawings in the writing center. Considering
the fact that this classroom did not emphasize art very much, it calmed my fears about my research to see their frequent art making. Because I wanted to focus on their communication through the arts, I became eager to have them in my research.

In addition, when the teachers set up small-group art activities, I kept an eye on Kathy, who was a very “good” student in this classroom, and she verbalized well. I discuss the notion of “good” student later when describing Kathy’s case. She knew what she was doing when making art; she could understand and follow the teacher’s instructions and do well on the task as it was given. After observing Kathy’s art making in Emily’s small-group project, in which Emily let the children paint on precut apple shapes, and another one in which she asked students to make a self-portrait, I kept Kathy in mind as a possible participant. When I failed to get the parents’ voluntary participation and their permission to observe their children, I asked Emily to persuade these parents to participate in my research. Thankfully, Emily was very supportive of my request to help convince these parents to give their permission. Subsequently, after obtaining acceptance letters from these parents, I began conducting my research project with three children. However, an odd thing happened at that time when working with the twin brothers and Kathy. Kathy did not want to make art long enough. She made art, but she wanted to leave the table early. I realized that she wanted to play with someone of the same gender or someone who was close to her when making art. In addition to these three children, the art table was always popular, so it was not difficult to find one more girl to participate in my art project. I approached the last girl, Sylvia, to ask if she would be willing to make art with me. She said yes, so I sent a letter of invitation with a short note to her parents. I told them I would really appreciate having Sylvia in my research project. I left a short note and the invitation letter in Sylvia’s mailbox. On that day, Sylvia’s father sent me an e-mail giving permission to include Sylvia. Sylvia was 4 years old, but she was very active in expressing her ideas, and it was a good combination between Kathy and Sylvia
because they were good friends and liked making art together. The recruitment of participants took 2 weeks from the time the invitation and consent letters were sent to the parents to the time I settled on the four focal students. Without Emily’s help, I do not think I could have finished choosing participants successfully.

Data Collection Methods

The design of qualitative research is an open-ended process, incorporating the researcher’s developing understandings of the setting, participants, and theory. I began my research on the communicative aspects of children’s art making at the Nobel learning school in the fall of 2007 and finished in the spring of 2008. In the data-collection process, I used ethnographic methods, including observations, interviews, and videotaping (to record children’s art-making process), analysis of the environment, and collection of documents in the selected classroom.

Participant Observation

The first step in data collection was participant observation. I observed the 4- and 5-year-old focal children three times a week at the school each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. According to Glesne (2006), the primary goal of participant observation is “to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behavior” (p. 51). During the timeline of my research project, I observed part of the children’s daily routines, their art-making process, and their guided center time. The purpose of this observation of children’s daily lives in the school setting was to understand how they learned to view art as an opportunity for socialization and as a communicative tool to interact with each other. I observed their morning routine three times per week. I also focused on understanding each student one by one, in terms of his or her personality and the kinds of interactions he or she engaged in during the art-making process, as a close-up of each participant. After finishing the general observations, I conducted multiple observations that focused on only
one focal child. This was to discern how each child built up his or her visual art-making experiences and to record and document his or her intramental functioning within the classroom context (Wertsch, 1998).

Because Emily wanted to step out of the role of teaching art, I managed to set up art tables on every visit from November 2007 to March 2008. I took field notes as often as possible when observing their daily routine, but I did not have time to write my memos when managing the art table. I mainly relied on my recording devices, but at the same time, I jotted down short notes during their art making. After cleaning up the art table, I made notes about what they did and said.

**Interviews**

The next step in data collection was to conduct interviews with the children, parents, and teachers. I conducted open-ended and semistructured interviews with the teachers and parents. However, the main purpose of these interviews was to better understand the participants, the four young children. By analyzing the parents’ and teachers’ assumptions about children’s art-making process, I gained a deeper understanding of participants in this study. I conducted two 40-minute interviews with the head teacher, Emily, and one 15-minute interview with each of the parents.

I mainly asked Emily questions about her art experiences when she was young, her goals in teaching art, and her understanding of the communicative aspects of children’s art making. I interviewed her two times, in November 2007 and February 2008. Consequently, I asked her questions to understand her ideas about communication and interaction through children’s art making (see Appendix).

Although it was easy to schedule interviews with the teachers, setting up the interviews with parents took some effort. All the mothers of children in the focal group were working moms. For example, one of the parents from the focal group strongly
wanted to do the interview via e-mail because she was a working mom with two young children. We therefore exchanged e-mails on the following topics: the interview, the mother’s interpretation of her daughter’s drawings, and my analysis of her daughter’s case. Another complication occurred when I received permission from Sylvia’s dad, only one parent. Because Sylvia’s parents were divorced, they shared the responsibility of taking care of their children (i.e., the mother would pick up their children three times per week and their dad would pick them up two times per week). After receiving permission from Sylvia’s father to observe her, I had a chance to meet Sylvia’s mother later in the classroom. When I introduced myself to her, I was embarrassed to learn that she did not know her daughter was in my research project. Thus, I interviewed Sylvia’s dad. After finishing these initial interviews, I used e-mail to follow up with additional questions.

All the interviews I conducted were semistructured; I handed out the primary questions, which were aimed at understanding my young participants in terms of their art making. These included questions concerning when the child made art, how the parent responded to the child, and the parent’s philosophy of art for his or her child (see Appendix). I also showed the parent one of the child’s drawings to see if he or she could understand it or what he or she thought of it. When I had additional thoughts about the child, I asked the parent questions to probe. For the interviews with these parents, I used the break room, where we could talk quietly. I set up the interview times during their pick-up times at the parents’ convenience, and I waited for them in the hallway, which prevented the children from becoming too excited when they saw their parents.

Last, I conducted a short interview with each of the children to understand when they made art and why they made art. During the research project, I mainly asked about the subjects of their drawings and what they thought of them. However, I also observed
their communication through art making, so these questions were helpful to understand those drawings further.

**Ethics**

Glesne (2006) pointed out that “ethical considerations are inseparable from your everyday interactions with research participants and with your data” (p. 129). In the process of research, many interactive processes take place between the researcher and the participant. Research with children should be a more complicated process in terms of ethics. This is because it involves additional power relationships, not only between the researcher and the participants, but also as an adult interacting with children.

Even though the researcher should attempt nonintervention with children to manage behaviors, there are a few cases in which it is necessary to be responsible as an adult (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). For example, as Corsaro (1985) found,

> Given the nature of the research, attempts to control behavior were few and produced only when I felt there was a chance that a certain activity might lead to physical injury. On these occasions my “Be careful” warnings were always countered with “You’re not a teacher!” or “You can’t tell us what to do!” (p. 31)

Just as Corsaro struggled with his unclear role in the setting, most researchers have similar experiences in the field. Looking back on my experiences, I remember a few children who called me “teacher” several times, but they sensed that I did not have formal authority over them. Although the researcher attempts to be on an equal status with the participants, it is appropriate to be conscious of their safety.

Moreover, one must consider the issue of informed consent. It is customary to obtain consent, not from the children, but from the parents, teachers, and administrators, especially when researching very young children. However, the researcher should explain the purposes of the research to the children. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) further argued that children should
be given information about the study, even though they may not fully understand it. In addition, in the phases of analysis and writing, the protection of identity is essential. I am aware of the issue of ethics, and when generating data, I uphold ethical standards in interacting with children. I informed the participants, their guardians or parents, and teachers of what I was studying and why, and I explained that I was collecting data for member checking. Finally, I gained verbal assent from each participant (see Appendix).

Validity

Children’s art making is a complicated process of interaction and learning social values and relationships. To understand children’s art-making process, I used multiple means of seeing the process. To make the research valid, Denzin (1978) proposed a means of triangulating data from several sources, participants, methods, and theories. In research work with young children, the most serious threats to validity are in how to derive plausible conclusions by observing children’s consumption of words and images, and their interactions with others.

Data Collection

Children’s drawings were one of the main data sources in this study. I took pictures of the children’s drawings and I returned most of the original copies of their art to them. If they gave me their art works, or they did not want to have them for the reason that they messed up, I kept these works. The participants eagerly wanted to bring their work home to show to their family, or they wanted to keep it for their own sake. I also collected weekly lesson plans made by the teacher and the goal of the month as determined by the school. These instructional resources were extremely helpful in analyzing the school curriculum and environment. Furthermore, I took pictures of the classroom environment when it changed.
In summary, I used multiple methods to generate data: (1) case studies, to research the focal students based on their voluntary participation and on their frequency and favoring of art activities; (2) ethnographic methods, to understand these focal students with regard to children’s art making as a complicated, interactive process involving multiple layers of social meaning and communication; and (3) semistructured interviews, to understand participants’ lives, as well as interviews with their parents and teachers, to understand their assumptions about and values toward visual art making. It was helpful as well to see how children grasped the projected values of art and the expectations about art from other people (parents, teachers, or their peers) through their visual art. Last, I used video devices to capture their interactions when making art. According to Tim Dant (2004), “Video recordings add visual data, which enables the analysis of non-verbal communication and the possibility of analyzing interaction which is meaningful but only in the material context of the setting” (p. 42). Video recording was helpful, especially when I missed a moment of social interaction at the site. It could also catch invisible factors in the communication, adding visual “thick description” (Geertz, 1973).

**Data Analysis**

In qualitative inquiry, the processes of data collection and data analysis are indivisible because these sometimes happen simultaneously, and frequently, the sequences of generation and interpretation of data alternate. Because researchers record memos during observation and analytical notes in reflecting on data, data analysis is a dynamic process of understanding a certain social phenomenon. While doing so, repeated or regular occurrences become apparent from the collected data. In analyzing children’s talk and art making, patterns emerged, and I categorized these emerging patterns. It is a complicated process until the patterns emerge from the qualitative data. In generating data, triangulation is important to
obtain valid understandings, because data analysis involving the triangulation of data provides a credible interpretation of the data. Thus, to analyze children’s art-making process, I interviewed children, parents, and teachers to gain an understanding of the multilayered context.

**Transcription**

As I collected verbal and visual data from the classroom environment, children’s talk and their evolving images were the focal points for understanding the flows of interaction and communication in context. Student utterances were the focus of the analysis, and Bakhtin’s concept of the utterance was applied in the analysis, which was tied to the speaker.

I began to transcribe the audio and video recordings collected in the process of data generation in chronological order. Generally, it took 3 to 4 hours to analyze 1 hour of tape. If I had difficulty understanding children’s conversations from the video, I referred to the audio recordings to verify the exact meanings they had delivered. In the beginning of data collection, I was successful in handling to make memos around the art table, but as time went on, I had only written memos and notes with recorded tapes. As soon as I finished the interviews with teachers and parents, these were transcribed by employees of a transcription service from India, which was cheaper compared with other services. With a few recommendations from my friends who had already used this transcription service, the interviews from audio recordings were translated into written form. I mainly used audio recordings when I met the interviewees, and I video recorded the interview sessions only with the head teacher. In the middle of data generation, I tried to find someone who could help me transcribe the video collections but eventually transcribed them myself. Because the video recordings were done in the classroom setting, it was difficult to understand the children’s conversation, so other people who had not been in the context had trouble comprehending the children’s talk. It took much longer to complete the video transcription: I transcribed a total
of 24 video recording sessions, and each session lasted in the range of 20 to more than 60 minutes, depending on how long my participants remained involved in the art activities. When the children had fun there, they wanted to have longer art sessions, so their activities sometimes continued until lunchtime. At other times, when they became bored, they left the art table early.

Transcription was a challenging process. Because the data were collected in the classroom setting, it took a great effort and patience to keep the process going. The first 10 video sessions were analyzed in the middle of data generation. However, the next 14 video sessions were transcribed 4 months after the completion of data collection. It took approximately 5 months to complete this process.

To produce transcripts, I listened to the audio tapes and watched the video recordings repeatedly. As stated earlier, because the recordings were made in the classroom setting, this was not an easy task. I returned to my field notes and memos to check if I understood their communication correctly. However, my video recordings proved to be one of most precious pieces of evidence for investigating children’s art-making process. It was an ideal means of recording children’s communication through verbal utterances and visual images. In each session, I initially recorded participants’ conversations and actions. Later, I included visual images in the transcription and coded the flow and phenomenon of their communication. In addition, I wrote my insights and reflections as I began to identify themes and categorize patterns in short phrases. The data are presented in the text in words, accompanied by explanations of the children’s nonverbal actions. The transcripts are shown with symbols to explain the actions and gestures the children used in their art-making process. Table 1 shows the categories of symbols used in the transcriptions.
Table 1. Transcription Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(</td>
<td>Single parentheses</td>
<td>Explanation of a nonverbal action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>End of a sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Question mark</td>
<td>Rising vocal pitch</td>
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<td>!</td>
<td>Exclamation point</td>
<td>Exciting vocal point</td>
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<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Ellipses</td>
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<td>Hyphen</td>
<td>Pause</td>
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<td>[ ]</td>
<td>Box brackets</td>
<td>Explanation of a context</td>
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<td>(()</td>
<td>Double parentheses</td>
<td>Indistinguishable utterance</td>
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<tr>
<td>↑↓</td>
<td>Arrows, pitch resets</td>
<td>Marked rising and falling shifts in intonation</td>
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</tbody>
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**Discourse Analysis**

After transcription and initial coding, discourse analysis was used to display and organize the talk, actions, and images that participants produced in the context. Discourse analysis considers how language establishes a social outlook and is used in various disciplines for many different purposes. W. James Potter (1996) explains discourse analysis in the following manner: “A researcher using this method orients toward finding the social and ideological dimension of language or some other language-like system of representation, such as films and television programs” (p. 137). In addition, this research methodology relies on the belief that discourse is constructed as a system; that speakers, who are immersed in society and cultural forms of discourse, form discourses; and that the discourse consists of facts about social values and information concerning historical venues (Gee, Michaels, & O’Conner, 1994).
The examination of languages and discourses in use makes visible how languages function in our daily lives. According to Gee (1994), “An oral or written ‘utterance’ has meaning, then, only if and when it communicates a who and what” (p. 22). To interpret the communicative function of children’s drawings, I used discourse analysis to understand the context and actual meaning of the art.

To analyze discourses that were spoken, written, and visually made forms of communication between people in the classroom context, I focused on “the language in use” (Kelly, 2006). Children are interacting through the art-making process; thus, by looking at the art-making process, we can make inferences regarding their early ideological becoming in the community. Because discourse analysis concerns the process of communication and the context of actual discourses, it seems appropriate to use this methodology to examine children’s art making.

Hence, discourse analysis makes unseen or invisible factors in children’s art more visible by paying attention to the details of and relations among those images. Because it focuses on the context of the production, it is appropriate for clarifying the communicative aspects of children’s art making.

**Taking Children’s Drawings More Seriously**

In the first step of analysis, I used discourse analysis methods to carefully examine the children’s actions and talk. In the second step of analysis, I used visual methodologies when analyzing the data to understand the children’s art and their art-making process. The genres of visual methodologies have arisen out of a growing awareness across the disciplines of the function of images. Various visual methodologies have been used across disciplines (i.e., in the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, photography, and art history) based on researchers’ growing awareness of the function of images (Rose, 2001). Gillian Rose (2001) offered the following classification of visual methodologies for studying visual images:
compositional interpretation, content analysis, semiology, psychoanalysis, and discourse analysis. Even though various methodologies and strategies have been used to examine images, only a small number of studies in art education have provided detailed accounts of the creation and interpretation of images children have created. With a visual methodology such as systematic analysis, for example, children’s art making can be understood as a whole picture, including unseen factors within the details of the picture, contextual information, and discourses. In researching children’s visual images, discourse analysis is used to examine children’s communication process and the contexts in which the actual discourse occurs during their art-making process.

Art is also a form of visual discourse that has been formed with specific cultural standards and tastes. In the present research, even though the discourse analysis mainly focuses on the context of the discourses, equal importance was placed on the study of children’s visual arts.

Data Reduction

The entire set of transcripts was converted from the audio recordings, video recordings, and photos of pictures into written format. Because the analysis of transcripts was an ongoing process of recording the children’s spoken and drawn utterances, to check the reliability of the data. I also inserted pictures and photos of the participants to contextualize their art-making process. As the data were extracted and transformed into the form of transcripts, I looked through all the written and visual data. These verbal utterances and children’s drawings were categorized and coded, and were oriented toward the communicative aspects of children’s art making and their interactions.

Through the process of open coding, I identified 27 categories of student utterances. I used the term visual utterances until the middle of the analysis process, but then changed the coding term from visual utterances to the communicative aspects of children’s art making.
This was because the categorization of children’s pictures was focused on the communicative aspects and the term *visual utterances* was too general to capture the findings of this research. While identifying the set of codes, I reduced patterns of talk and phenomena of visual art making, in order to present frequent and distinct occurrences of communicative practices. During the art-making events, I largely identified eight patterns. First, children’s verbal utterances were categorized as Talk to Self, Social Talk, Art-Related Talk, Play Talk, and Personal Stories. The phenomena of communication in children’s art making were largely categorized as Inner Communication, Person-to-Person Communication, and Drawing on Larger Social Discourses. Overall, I identified a total of 23 patterns of student utterances in children’s art-making process.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is important in qualitative research to obtain valid understandings and credibility of the study. In the data collection process, I spent a great deal of time observing students as a group and as individuals in a naturalistic setting. In the initial observations, I focused on understanding each student in terms of his or her personality and the kinds of interactions that occurred between the teacher and students. After observing ordinary art classes, I included a second type of observation, focusing on only one child at a time, to discern how each child built up his or her visual art-making experiences. In this process, I conducted two or three observations that focused on only the one focal child. I repeated this intense observation for each of my focal students. Along with this step of observation, I recorded memos on my reflections, questions, and findings. At the school site, I captured children’s talk and actions by using video-recording devices. These data include observations and interviews with children, parents, and teachers to analyze the children’s art-making process. Because the research was involved with children’s art, it was proper to investigate children’s art carefully as important visual data. To check the credibility of my findings, I
looked through the data several times in the process of generating coding, recontextualizing the context, and interpreting their pictures. In addition, interviews with the students, their teachers, and their parents facilitated my understanding of the findings of this study.

Because data analysis involving the triangulation of data provides a credible interpretation of the data, the data underwent several process of analysis. In the first step of analysis, I employed several discourse analysis methods to examine their actions and talk carefully. In the second step of analysis, I used visual methodologies when analyzing the data, to understand the children’s art. Likewise, I used methodological triangulation, collecting data through the use of multiple methods and using multiple processes of data analysis. I used open and focused coding processes, an examination of patterns, and member checking (interviews with parents) to create an analysis that would resonate with children’s artistic voices about their products.

Accordingly, the time allotted for data collection was sufficient to understand the participants and phenomena in the classroom, and multiple sources of data collection and analysis were used to obtain trustworthiness in the findings of this study.

**Limitations**

Even though I tried to obtain trustworthiness in my research by using triangulation, the study nevertheless has limitations. My research site was a prekindergarten class, where a tremendous number of events were happening at the same time in terms of the ongoing interaction, cultural practices, instruction, and learning. Even though this study used multiple methods of recording students’ art-making process, the audio and video recordings and photos of pictures might have limitations in showing the whole picture of their art-making episodes. Mainly, the transcripts and my reflections were dependent on the recordings collected. Because these were collected in a classroom environment and because several students were talking at the same time, it was impossible to make perfect recordings of their
In addition, there were a tremendous number of incidents of communicative practices and hidden interactions. Even though I tried to take recontextualization of their artmaking process into account as much I could, I might have missed the moment of communication for the reasons mentioned above.

In addition, this study focused on understanding the children’s pictures. Compared with interpreting verbal utterances, interpreting pictures was a more challenging process. To avoid misunderstanding the students’ meaning and intent, I investigated their utterances based on valuing the context, and I asked them questions during the art-making process. However, it was impossible to grasp the latent meanings in and hidden stories behind the whole picture because the researcher is not the student who created the picture.

**Summation**

In this chapter, I explained how I used qualitative research methodologies. Furthermore, I presented the research site, context, and process of data generation. Next, I discussed how I analyzed my data in the steps of coding, data reduction, and using multiple sources of data analysis. In the next chapter, I present the coding categories in detail.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

In this section, I provide profiles of the focal students. Getting to know the four focal students promoted an understanding of the context of the art table, the flow of interaction among students, and the characteristics of each student. Next, I explain the process by which the generated themes based on my observation in children’s verbal and visual utterances were generated. Last, I identify the themes found in the verbal and the visual utterances that occurred around the art table in this study.

Profiles of Focal Students

Daniel

When I first visited this classroom, Daniel was 4½ years old. He was willing to share the pictures he drew with his fellow students. For example, when Daniel drew a series of Spidermen and Spiderman fingers, he showed the others how to make them. He explained how he made those characters while providing the background of the stories he created. When choices were available, he often drew several drawings in one sitting. He was also eager to share what he had done the day before, and he shared many stories with his teachers and peers to demonstrate how he drew certain characters. In talking about the subject matter, sometimes he shared stories or his knowledge of nature or fictional stories, which were accepted by his peers in their discussion of the subject. Usually he was focusing on his art making at the same time he was talking about the subject, but he would make eye contact with others after he finished his work. His mother described Daniel as “very friendly and talking all the time” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007).
Daniel is one of a set of twins and is the brother of Edward. Daniel would greet me when I entered the classroom with “Hi, Ms. Sue,” and sometimes he talked about what he did as a sort of personal story. Because Daniel and Edward were not identical twins, I did not realize at first that they were twins, even though both of them had big eyes, dark brown curly hair, and good manners when they shared toys and played with their friends. They looked somewhat alike, but they did not wear matching clothes. Because I was there to observe the classroom, I was a favored audience for Daniel and listened with interest to his stories. He always wanted to show his work to other people, but he favored adult guests over his peers.

His father is a scientist, his mother is a designer, and he has an older sister who is an elementary student. When I began visiting the classroom, Daniel would sit by me at the writing table as he created a goblin with no eyes (which was one of his favorites in his series of monsters). He proudly told me that he was 4½ years old and answered my questions regarding Edward. Describing his twin brother, Daniel said, “We’re so different. I don’t know but he is not as good as his mommy” (Interview with Daniel, October 10, 2007). He was answering my question of whether they were twins at that time, when I found out their last name was the same on the attendance list.

At home, he received encouragement in art making, with family support. His mother addressed the importance of art as follows: “Art is your expression of your ideas. It is like poetry. It is a way to express your ideas and your thoughts and your feelings. It is very important” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). His mother said that Daniel and Edward always showed their art to her, and she responded to their drawings according to the details and themes: “Sometimes they show me a monster and I say, ‘Oh my God! I am so scared!’ I will hold the paper so it will not eat me or something. Sometimes I say, ‘That is very scary’ or I will ask, ‘What did you draw?’ or ‘What is he doing?’ I ask him...
about the pictures” (see figure below). She interpreted that Daniel and Edward wanted to get her approval and wanted to know that they were doing something good, that they drew well.

The head teacher, Emily, told me that Daniel’s father was good at drawing. One day, Daniel and Edward brought their father’s drawings to school, and these were hung in the corner of the classroom wall (Figure 1). Based on the conversation I had during the data generation process, the twins had read science books and shared information from the book. Daniel once created a germ and a microscope, although he is particularly interested in the universe and aliens. He liked to follow what his father drew, and was obviously proud of his father’s work. From a researcher’s view, it was interesting to see the parent’s drawings hanging on the classroom wall surrounded by the students’ works.

![Figure 1. Drawings by Daniel and Edward’s father on the preschool classroom wall.](image)

Overall, during the entire data generation process, Daniel produced the most abundant artwork in terms of quantity. Daniel’s mother said Daniel and Edward make art all the time at home: “They have a table with markers and crayons and scissors and glue sticks and papers, as many as they want” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). In my earliest visit to the classroom, Daniel and Edward could be distinguished from other students in terms of the quantity and quality of their artwork, including the stories they created. They may have been advanced in art making and in telling stories through art because of their family background, because their mom was a designer and their dad drew
with and for them. That the boys received encouragement for their drawing at home was
evident, as were the differences in the ways they responded to that encouragement, with
Daniel seeming much more inclined to become immersed in his work than Edward. Further,
the easy accessibility to art materials at home could have been a factor leading to their love of
art.

Daniel’s mom mentioned that Daniel preferred cool colors, such as blues and greens,
and that he often drew with just pencil and pen, compared with Edward, who loved drawing
with multiple colors. His mother explained that even though Daniel had many markers,
crayons, and pencils to choose from, he would draw with only one color or with a pencil or
pen. At the beginning of data generation, he generally did not use color (Figure 2). These
drawing were created at home, and he brought them to school.

![Figure 2. Daniel’s drawings that he made at home, Monsters, pencil on paper.](image)

As I observed Daniel drawing in the classroom, I noticed that he proceeded to create art very
quickly and always told many stories during his art making. With any given material, Daniel
quickly persevered when he decided to make something. It seemed that Daniel used a limited
number of colors compared with his brother Edward, perhaps because he wanted to create
more drawings in a hurry. Between the twin brothers, Daniel was more inclined to draw with
continuous lines than was Edward. This is an indicator of a different approach toward
drawing, and an ability to previsualize that is often associated with giftedness (or possibly
just a different kind of thinking about drawing) in young children. Daniel’s drawings were
executed with more descriptive enclosing lines and a fast speed, and he was often less inclined to work in color. He loved to create many drawings in succession, accompanied by his own stories. This could be due to his intention for drawing, not wanting to interrupt the flow, and perhaps not wanting to pick up another color when he was in the midst of drawing.

Daniel shared numerous drawings on various themes, such as dinosaurs, aliens, and ghosts. His monsters, dinosaurs, and other scientific and fantasy themes seemed to be influenced by his father. (It is intriguing that the drawings by Daniel’s father that were hung on the wall were of dinosaurs, monsters, and humans with superhuman powers.) Daniel mentioned that he followed what his dad drew a lot (Interview with Daniel, March 17, 2008). He explained that the reason he often drew monsters was that he liked them, based on his imagination. At the same time, he used a wide variety of themes (including characters from the animation series *Batman* and *Spiderman*), but revisited his favorite subjects off and on. When he drew something, he vocalized his findings and argued with his peers, but also valued what others thought. When the student teacher, Amy, took over the classroom with the theme of Halloween, Daniel favored “a lot of fantasy characters like monsters, ghosts, skeletons, and these fantasy creatures” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). Below is a description of Daniel explaining his monster:

I’m going to make a ghost (responding to a Halloween story that the student teacher had read to the class). I’m making a big monster. The eyes are out. (Soon, Daniel made a goblin with no eyes.) Because I have a goblin monster. Somebody in Halloween[. . . ] and it’s gonna turn (on) our goblin, but I’m making a goblin with no eyes. (He made another monster.) It has lots of legs. It’s a big monster and it’s walking. One eye with no legs, lots of fingers. (He counted up to eight fingers.) I think that’s what a monster looks like, eight fingers.
Watching Daniel draw over a period of months, I learned that he made many connections to his own experiences, to stories that he had heard, and to movies he had watched. Daniel and Edward referred to many objects from books and movies. Daniel’s mother shared her theory about his fascination with monsters: “Because I read them a lot of stories. We read a lot of stories with all the fantasy monsters like centaurs and fairies and all of that. We read a lot of stories” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). When I asked Daniel if he had seen a real snake (because he was producing many snake drawings at that time), he replied that he had seen snakes in a science book. When I inquired why Daniel and Edward were interested in aliens, their mother replied, “We do not have cable TV, only movies and series. They watch things and I guess Halloween also and all the monsters and animated things, Spiderman, aliens, dinosaurs, and things like that” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). When the student teacher, Amy, progressed to the theme of Halloween, their choice of subject matter (ghosts and aliens) was noticeable. Daniel actively brought in cultural sources when creating art (Figure 3).

![Daniel’s Monster Houses](image)

*Figure 3. Daniel’s Monster Houses, precut paper scraps and glue on paper.*

Daniel: I am making a monster house.

Me: You are making a monster house?

Daniel: Because I saw that in a movie.
Kathy: Yes, me too.

Daniel: That was so scary.

Daniel: I do not like pirates in the house, bumping, bumping, and bumping. The grass woods are opening. You remember that book, the fable, “Hurry, they are coming and we won,” and then the house came back together. (to Kathy)

Daniel continued on, explaining the movie in detail. Likewise, he made many connections to his experiences, stories that he had heard, and movies he had watched. This was a habit that Daniel shared with his twin brother, Edward. He frequently shared complex plots and stories that seemed to encompass other stories and references in a kind of “collaged,” associative way of talking that is typical of young children.

In Daniel’s world, the media (print and electronic) provided many resources for imaginative play in his drawings, and possibly media provided some of Daniel’s motivation for his interest in playing on paper. His switch to snakes indicated that the books they read with their parents and the videos they watched had a blend of fact and fiction. This could be interpreted to mean that Daniel liked to make a series of the same subject matter, accompanying his drawings with different stories. For example, Daniel often created consecutive drawings of different aliens and explained how the characters were different from one another. I believe he was inspired by other cultural sources, but that he created his own version of those stories in his art making.

One very interesting moment occurred when we did collaborative drawing together, using tempera paint and large pieces of paper laid on the floor, which I initiated intentionally (Figure 4). I was curious what would happen when the children were drawing together on the piece of paper. I did not participate in the project, except at the moment when Sylvia wanted me to demonstrate how to draw a lion. I set the project in motion and observed what happened. I prepared the large paper on the floor and invited the children to think briefly
about what they were going to make. Sylvia and Kathy were happily talking about the fact that they were wearing the same pink. Daniel announced, “I’m gonna start with aliens.” In the meantime, Kathy and Sylvia began making art while sitting side by side. Both girls lay on the floor so as not to get dirty when using the acrylic paints. At that time, Edward was creating a bad alien. Edward also drew an alien like Daniel was doing. Both Daniel and Edward shared the same subject matter; however, Edward differentiated his alien as a bad alien.

Kathy asked Sylvia, “Did you see what Daniel painted on it?” Sylvia replied, “Yeah,” and they exchanged glances and started laughing at Daniel’s drawing. Until that time, Daniel had been recognized by his peers for his good artwork, but suddenly the two girls united in disapproval of Daniel’s work.

Daniel contended, “It’s an alien with a huge bite.” Kathy was creating her house and her mom, and Sylvia was making fish for her mom. I warned Daniel to be careful of his pants, but Daniel said, “I already painted on my pants, but that’s okay, ’cause I can ask my mom (to clean it up).” Daniel articulated his new subject as a tornado: “I’m making a tornado. A big tornado. Look at my tornado. Look at my tornado, Edward.” At the same time, Sylvia asked me how to draw a lion and how to make a yellow lion. Edward and Sylvia were focusing on my drawing and did not respond to Daniel at that time. When I finished drawing the lion by

![Figure 4. Collaborative Painting 1, acrylic paint.](image-url)
adding on ears, Edward agreed that it looked like a lion. It seemed important to the children to draw something that looked like the real thing. On the other hand, Sylvia was following me by drawing a lion. Sylvia was astonished to find Daniel’s drawing after finishing her lion: “Wow, look at Daniel! I’m gonna make that.” Kathy nodded to Sylvia as she agreed on Sylvia’s choice. Then Daniel explained proudly, “That’s a monster in the fire who flew in the map.” Suddenly, Daniel showed off another skill: “Look at what I made, Sue. I wrote this in Hebrew and this is Hebrew.” Up to this point, Daniel had been in a fine mood. He announced, “Now I’m mixing colors, ’cause I love mixing colors.” At that moment, Daniel wanted to show what he could do. There were many purposes for art making for Daniel, namely, social art, expressive art, play art, and so on, and his art making had many features. On this day when the students were drawing together, Daniel wanted to articulate that he could do something (i.e., mixing colors and writing in Hebrew) that was very reflective of his heritage. He consistently tried to hold others’ attention. However, at the same time, Edward found a new discovery in how to make the color pink.

Daniel: Can I show you how to write in Hebrew? (to Kathy) It’s like this.

(Kathy did not respond to Daniel.)


Sylvia: How did you make pink? (She went to Edward to see how it worked.)

Edward: I made red and white together, and then it turned pink.

Sylvia: Red and white together (coming back to her spot). I’m making mine pink.

Edward: You’re stirring it, great! That’s my alien.

Mine is darker pink. Yours is light pink. Yellow? I don’t know what I mix in it.

Daniel: Edward, I made brown. I made a browny color.

Edward: How did you make that?
Daniel: Mixed the white, red, and red. I mixed a lot, a lot, and a lot. I made brown. (showing the color to everyone, but nobody was paying attention to him)

Sylvia: I made pink.

Kathy: How did you make it?

Sylvia: OK. First, you use that white, stir. You can use yellow . . . and stir, stir, and stir it up.

Daniel: I made brown! (Nobody is paying attention to him.)

Sylvia: It’s peach.

Daniel: I made brown! (Still nobody is paying attention to him.) I made brown, Sylvia. I made brown.

Kathy: Are you going to make peach again?

Daniel: I made brown. (He is showing his brush to Kathy.)


There were active discussions and dialogues between Sylvia and Kathy about how to make pink. Kathy began to make fun of Daniel at the end of the pink-mixing discussion: “Did you see what Daniel is doing?” (She was laughing and directed this remark to Sylvia.)

Meanwhile, Daniel kept talking, saying that he had made the color brown by mixing two different colors. When the other children did not show an interest in Daniel’s discovery of his color, Daniel further claimed later that he had made black. Still, nobody paid attention to him, so Daniel’s mood was deflated. At that time, Kathy pointed out Daniel’s pants: “My pants are clean, but look at Daniel.” Daniel was very mad about his dirty pants, and he cried for several minutes. I got the feeling that he was not as upset about his dirty pants as he was because the others were not enthusiastic about his art making and Kathy had compared her clean pants with Daniel’s dirty ones. When he felt that he was not getting enough attention, he got very angry. Daniel wanted to get approval for his color mixing from his peers. Whereas Edward
was complimented by the girls for making the color pink, Daniel’s brown did not get very much attention. This episode is an atypical incident in relation to Daniel. Daniel always wanted to get recognition from others and he was good at executing art making, with an abundance of details and interesting stories, so he did not often become frustrated. When Edward and the girls were talking about the pink and peach colors, Daniel felt isolated; he could not hide his frustration and burst into tears.

Even though the children’s art making went through several processes, such as visualization, internalization, and others, they sensitively recognized the existence of a viewer. When we are speaking through forms of talk and pictures (in the use of cultural tools), there is always tension between the cultural tools and that particular context. In creating the collaborative drawing, it was clear how much Daniel valued others’ opinions and the social value he placed on his art-making process, for example, in his choice of subject matter and colors. The episode above describes the complexity of the children’s communicative practices. Many things happen when children make art together: talking in advance about the exchanges, quick switches, odd comments, and so forth.

Edward

Edward, Daniel’s twin brother, was a very different child from Daniel. Most of the time, he only shared the stories in his art when he decided to share them, and he created imaginary stories during his art making. Many times, when I asked what he was making while a drawing was in progress, he would say, “You’ll see.” In my observation, Edward shared comments, asked questions, and talked to himself during the art-making process, but he sometimes objected to being asked to explain (usually to an adult) what he was making in the middle of the process. He preferred to provide his explanation to me (or to the teachers) when he was ready, usually after finishing his work. Sometimes he shared a story in relation to the characters in the picture, as in the following example.
Edward: I’m making a tape.

Me: For what?

Edward: For my mommy, and I am going to draw a cat.

Me: How old is he?

Edward: She is an imaginary cat. Her cat name is Bella and she is going to do something to the mother cat.

Like Daniel, Edward was involved in creating stories about imaginary creatures, such as ghosts or aliens (Figure 5). Edward liked to create stories of animals in his art making. He loved animals, and they were his favorite subjects for drawing. His mother addressed the importance of art to her children, especially to Edward: “It makes them express their ideas sometimes. Especially with Edward, I know outside and in school, he is very shy and quieter. At home, he is very difficult. He gets very angry, so sometimes I talk to him even about colors. ‘When you are angry, what color do you feel? What color is your anger?’ ‘Red,’ he tells me. Or I say, ‘Go draw a picture. Go draw me a very angry picture or a very sad picture.’ It is a way for them to take out what they feel” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). Once, in a conversation with Edward’s mother, I commented that Edward seemed to have a very strong mind. His mother answered, “He is very, very emotional. He is very strong. Daniel is very soft and friendly. Edward is also friendly, but he has very strong emotions about everything. He likes something very much. When he is angry, he is very angry. When he is sad, it is the end of the world. Everything is very strong.” It seemed that Edward used the space of art as a mediator to connect his thoughts with his feelings. He explained the reason for his art making: “I draw by myself. I draw chimps. I don’t make art for somebody. I make art by myself. Because I like making art. I don’t want to show art to somebody. I don’t want to share it. I just draw . . . because I like drawing”
Edward: I want to make a walrus.

Me: [A] walrus?


Kathy: A purple walrus? (to Edward)

Edward: No.

Kathy: A yellow walrus? (to Edward)

Me: Kathy, what are you going to make?

Daniel: I’m making a huge snake.

Edward: I’m making a tail.

Me: Daniel, I really like your snake.

Edward: That’s a snake, but I don’t see any snake there.

Daniel: Edward is making a walrus.

Can I write my name now? I’m done. D-A-N-I-E- and then L, Daniel. (?)

Edward: Look at my walrus.
Kathy: I’m gonna make what Sylvia is gonna make.

Me: (to Edward) It’s your walrus?

Edward: Yeah.

Me: It has eyes?

Daniel: Look at my eyes. (He may be talking about the eyes on his snake.)

Edward: I need . . . I need a little bit of black.

Kathy: I’m gonna make the walrus and I’m trying to watch him.

Edward: Daniel, why did you use yellow?

Daniel: Because, I’m making a walrus. It’s because it’s not brown.

Look at Sylvia’s pancake, (laughing)

Sylvia: That’s ok.

Me: What are you making, Edward?

Edward: I’m making his face.

Me: Oh, [the] walrus has a face too.

Edward: Yeah.

Daniel: Look at me, giant mixed walrus?

Me: Edward, where has your walrus gone?

Edward: I didn’t want to make it because it’s too hard, . . . so I made this.

Me: What’s that?

Edward: A ball . . . alien egg, I mean.

Me: Edward, have you ever seen aliens before?

Edward: No, but I want to go out into space to check out the stars.

Me: OK. So it’s your alien, right?

Edward: Yeah.

Me: It has eyes? It has legs and arms too?
Edward: Yeah.

Edward addresses the subject of art making in this episode, and the subject matter shows his interest in animals (Figure 5). While carrying out his project, he was singing a song, “Hollywood ticket . . . Hollywood ticket.” Based on the rhymes of the song, I might have misunderstood his subject matter of the walrus as Wallace, an animated character from the TV series Wallace & Grommit. Edward had made a series of drawings about walruses before this, and he made a walrus after this out of Play-Doh. In the beginning of the episode, Edward added an explanation of his art-making process. I coded this as self-regulatory talk because he did not intend to make a speech (which is different from Daniel, who always wanted to get attention from others when making art), but he responded to Kathy for purposes of clarification. Kathy first wanted to follow Edward’s subject matter, but she changed her mind and copied Sylvia’s instead. Kathy suddenly gave up making a walrus. She appeared to realize the difficulty of making a representation of the walrus. When I complimented Daniel on his snake, Edward questioned whether the snake was real or fake. Between Daniel and Edward, they generally exchanged critiques and compliments about each other’s work. However, Edward was being more critical than Daniel when he raised the question of whether the subject matter looked real. In the meantime, Edward added more details to the walrus, from the hands, to the eyes, to the face.

Influenced by Edward’s subject matter, Daniel also made a walrus. After eight minutes of trying to make a walrus, Edward gave up on making one because it was too difficult. Edward quickly changed his mind and decided to make an alien instead, a safer and more readily achievable goal. He then went on to make a series of aliens.

Unlike his twin brother Daniel, Edward seemed to enjoy his personal space in the art-making process. He talked when making art, but his comments took the form of self-regulatory talk and explanations of the themes and details in his drawings. He did not usually
want to tell other people what the subject matter was until he had finished his work. When I inquired what he was making, he repeatedly said, “You’ll see.” This may be because he often changed his mind. For example, when he was using the Play-Doh, he first wanted to make a walrus, but then he gave up trying to make one because he had difficulty creating the animal the way he wanted. Edward seemed to change the subject frequently in the process of creating one piece of art. Compared with Daniel, who created many pages of drawings in a short time, Edward took a longer time to produce his art and included more detail, which is an important point of contrast between the twins. His mother commented on the characteristics of Edward’s art: “He has more details and faces. He draws a lot of faces on things. He chooses more warm [colors], like orange and brown” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). Although their choice of subject matter tended to be distinctive, sometimes they would indulge in their common interest in the area of monsters, aliens, and other similar subjects.

Usually the boys exchanged signs of appreciation and evaluated each other’s artwork when they worked at the drawing table. For example, on the day I prepared the precut circle shapes and glue, Daniel first made a mouse and Edward soon followed by choosing the same subject matter when the teachers complimented Daniel on his mouse (Figure 6).
Daniel: I’m making a mouse.

Me: [A] mouse??

Daniel: Yeah. . . . A mouse head. I’m making a mouse head! It’s a baby mouse. (to the side)

A nose, and ears, and eyes. . . . Hey, look what I’m . . . look what I did! (to Edward)

Edward: Good, I saw it already!

Daniel: Do you like mine?

Edward: Do you like my circle?

Daniel: Hey! (to the side) Let me show you something! Mrs. Geetika! Look at my mouse.

Look, look!

Emily (head teacher): Good job! Very nice!

Daniel: Where are my mice?

Figure 7. Daniel creating a series of mice.

Me: A mouse? That looks like a very big mouse.

Edward: That’s a bad mouse.

Daniel: I’m making good mouses [mice].

Sylvia: (to Edward) There’s his nose.

Edward: I’m gonna make his eyes pink. I’m gonna make his eyes pink, Sylvia.
Figure 8. Edward’s series of mice.

Sylvia: (laughs)

Edward: [Something] made his nose red. This is a reddy mouse.

Me: Reddy mouse?

Edward: . . . Daniel, do you like my mice . . . my mouse?

Daniel and Edward always wanted to solicit comments from each other. Even though Daniel liked to get recognition from adults, he usually first checked what Edward thought of his work. When Daniel asked if Edward liked his mouse, Edward immediately responded by asking if Daniel liked his circles.

Daniel created a series of mice, and Edward teased Daniel that Daniel’s mouse was a bad mouse (Figures 7 and 8). Daniel soon responded that he had made a good mouse. I found out that Edward did not talk about his work very much but that he liked to give others comments and ask them questions. He also liked to tease his brother Daniel, and I observed this pattern repeatedly.

Edward also shared his prior and personal experiences, which were reflected in his art-making process, and he and Daniel always made a good pair when playing together, such as when they would imitate the scenes from a movie. For instance, they shared very interesting conversations when using the modeling clay.

Edward: I’m making his head (attaching the part on the box). Snow- snow- snow (singing softly). Is that fat? (to Daniel) Why is he big and fat?
Daniel: I’m just making it.
Edward: Pssss. Wasp in your ear (bringing the clay up to Daniel’s ear). Psss- Psss- Psss.
Daniel: Stop it.
Edward: Okay. Pssss- Pss (breaking a piece off the mass of clay). I’m making it again. (Edward rolls up the clay.) Here is the leg, Daniel. (He suddenly drops the piece on the floor.) I smashed it down. (He brings the piece over to the table, and smashes it down hard, making it flat.) Once we saw in a movie, the robot Leo makes a big step, and he said boom- boom- boom (as he was making a walking action).
Daniel: And then he became bigger and bigger (making a growing action by holding up both his hands). They hold houses.
Edward: Yeah.
Me: What’s the movie?
Daniel: Truemonsie. (?) (Edward and Daniel are playing together, imitating scenes from the movie.)
Edward: That looks like the walrus. Daniel, do I look like the walrus?
Daniel: No.
Edward: I want to be the walrus.
Daniel: Walruses are not real.
Edward: Yes, they are.
Daniel: It’s like Harry Potter.

With the material of modeling clay, they spent more than 40 min making art. First, I assumed that because of the color of the modeling clay and Daniel and Edward’s interest in the season, they were making snowmen. Edward wanted to keep his subject matter a secret (“You will see”), but he also wanted to draw my attention to his work (“Look at what I’m doing”). Whereas Daniel kept to his same subject matter of a snowman (mommy and kid) and
A snail from the beginning to the end, Edward kept changing his, from a snowman, to a snowball, to a smoothing bandage, to a snake, to all kinds of boxes. Daniel created three different individual creatures, whereas Edward transformed his subject matter by constructing and deconstructing the subject. In the last period of modeling clay work, Edward said that he wanted to be a walrus and had a conversation with Daniel about whether it was real or fake. Edward’s love of animals was a theme that continued throughout the entire data collection process, and he sometimes referred to his beloved stuffed gorillas in his art making. Edward seemed to be more playful in his approach, and there was some teasing between Edward and Daniel.

It was interesting to see how differently these twin brothers created art. Edward’s mother shared how she reacted to their artwork: “[I say things like] ‘It’s very nice. It’s very colorful. I like the colors you choose.’ If it is a monster, I say, ‘It’s very scary.’ If it is a gorilla, I say, ‘Wow! I like the fur on the gorilla.’ I choose something that they draw and I talk about it. Sometimes when I don’t have patience or I am busy, I say, ‘Wow! That’s beautiful.’ But usually, I talk about the picture that they draw” (Interview with Daniel and Edward’s mother, December 7, 2007). It is possible that her comments in response to their art motivated each child to develop his own interests. In addition, the children’s different personalities were a major factor contributing to their differences.

Kathy

Kathy is the youngest member of her family. At the time of my observations, her brother, Adam (pseudonym), was an elementary school student. He also attended the Noble Learning Academy, in their after-school program. Kathy often mentioned her brother, saying that he was tall and that sometimes he was not nice to her. Her father was a public school teacher and her mother worked in the same school district. Kathy usually created art at school (Interview with Kathy, March 14, 2008). However, in my first observation period before
choosing my focal students, I noticed that Kathy chose not to do art by herself. Unlike Kathy, Daniel and Edward went to the writing center to pick up the markers and paper, and they talked about the stories in their drawings. Nevertheless, when the materials were set up and when the art activity was prepared, Kathy understood the task and the teachers’ instructions quickly and proceeded to do a good job. She preferred talking with peers to talking with teachers, but she was good at explaining her thoughts, whereas other younger students were not yet as verbal.

In my initial observation period of the whole classroom, it seemed that Kathy knew what the teachers were asking. Compared with other students, she was good at meeting the teachers’ expectations. In this classroom, the teachers used visual art to show what the class had learned. For example, when they read a story or learned about a theme, sometimes the teachers asked the children to draw about what they had learned, or they might make a card for their parents or others with materials prepared by the teachers. For example, after Kathy listened to the story of *Clifford, The Big Red Dog*, she wanted to make a doghouse for Clifford. As she completed her drawing, Kathy explained that she had made a Clifford house, directly relating her picture to the story time on that day. She was responsive to what the teachers asked in making connections between what she had learned or what she knew from her art making. The head teacher, Emily, described Kathy as follows:

She is also quite a bit of a perfectionist, and so she wants to make sure she is not going to make anything wrong. Her activity is not only in her art, but everything is driven by wanting to do everything perfect and right, and even the way that she is passing out plates and for snack or lunch or whatnot. (Interview with Emily, November, 2007)

She often talked to herself when making art, such as when she pronounced a word she was spelling, when she sang a song, or when she described what she was doing. In my
observations, Kathy liked talking and playing mostly with other girls. In the early steps of data generation, I began with 3 students, Daniel, Edward, and Kathy. When the twin brothers were absent, Kathy did not want to do the art project by herself, but instead wanted to play with the other girls in the carpeted area. At that moment, I realized I needed more participants, at least one more, considering the fact that Kathy wanted to be with peers of the same sex. In the early steps of the data generation period, Kathy was quiet until Sylvia joined the group of focal students. Kathy and Sylvia were a good pair in the classroom. It was obvious that Kathy was more talkative when she was with Sylvia. When she made art with the two boys, she did not speak up very much. In terms of the role of talk in art making, if children can turn on or off their talk depending on who is close by, then we can assume that their utterances are primary social.

Kathy was very persistent in picking up the subject matter, but she made variations on it, such as her mom with a big lake, her mom and their house, and so on. Even though Kathy had a strong tendency to choose the subject matter of her family, she was also open to other subjects when her peers chose a different, but equally interesting, subject or when she wanted to show her similarity to her peers. When working with Play-Doh at the art table, for example, it was interesting to see the transitions in Kathy’s art making.

Kathy: I’m going to make what Sylvia is gonna make. I’m gonna make what she is gonna make. You can see my fingers.

Sylvia: I need one more color to make that. Something really cool.

Kathy: I’m gonna make what you are gonna make. That's Play-Doh man (showing hers to Sylvia).

(Kneading the dough again) Just, I don’t like this. . . . So I smashed it down. . . .

Sylvia: I’m gonna make pancakes.

Kathy: I’m gonna make a bracelet, too. I’m gonna make what Sylvia is gonna make.
Kathy wanted to pique Sylvia’s interest by addressing the fact that she made a Play-Doh man, but Sylvia did not show any reaction to Kathy. Soon, Kathy smashed her sculpture down and said that she did not like the Play-Doh man; she seemed to do so in response to Sylvia’s lack of attention to her work, possibly taking Sylvia’s silence as an implicit critique. Kathy tried to mimic Sylvia’s art making several times during the time I observed.

Kathy seemed to be easily influenced by other people. She imitated Sylvia’s pancake making, but she made her own object—bracelets (Figures 8 and 9). However, Kathy was the only person who used a tool, the lid of the canister, in working with the Play-Doh. She made a bracelet out of the pancake. At the end of her art making, Kathy said she was making this object for her mother. The concept of “art as a gift” is a prevalent theme in preschool classrooms (Tarr, 1992).

**Figure 9. Sylvia’s Pancake and Bracelet, Play-Doh.**

Regarding Kathy’s art making, Daniel commented, “She is always making [things for] her mom,” and Kathy’s response was, “Because I love my mom.” It seemed that Kathy’s favorite subject was her mother (or her family), but she was easily influenced by others to adopt the same subject matter as her peers. However, it was interesting to see how Kathy maintained her own voice, cultivating a similarity of intention with her peers even as she
created her own version of the subjects they introduced. This occurred a number of times when she was at the art table during the time I was observing her art making. For example, when the head teacher was reading the storybook *The First Thanksgiving*, the teacher asked the students what they were thankful for on that day. Usually, the art table was set up right after the story circle time, so my focal students would sometimes refer directly to what they had learned and talked about in their circle time. Daniel initiated a drawing of an apple tree because he liked apples and was thankful for them (then later added a turkey right next to the apple tree; Figure 10). Soon afterward, Kathy followed by announcing that she was going to make an apple tree, as Daniel had. After drawing the apple tree, she drew her mom beside the apple tree (Figure 11). She was easily influenced by others; however, she made variations on her work.

*Figure 10. Daniel’s Apple Tree and Turkey.*

*Figure 11. Kathy’s Apple Tree and Mom.*

In Bakhtin’s view (Holquist, 1999), utterances are intricate, portraying social and active angles of the world. Bakhtin considered utterances as having a more subjective and active role in terms of authoring the self. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain (1998) identified the ideas of self and identity formation as follows:

In such a diverse and contentious social world, the author, in everyday life as in artistic work, creates by orchestration, by arranging overheard elements, themes, and
forms, not by some outpouring of an ineffable and central source. That is, the author works within, or at least against, a set of constraints that are also a set of possibilities for utterance. (p. 171).

It is apparent that in selecting the images and subject matter, Kathy created visual utterances in a deliberate and incidental investigation based on her experiences and other social factors.

At some point in the middle of the data collection period, Kathy’s attitude changed in relation to Sylvia. Sylvia was the youngest of the research participants. (Sylvia had just turned 4, and her peers were 4½ at the beginning of data collection.) When Sylvia lost confidence in her ability to create detailed figures, Kathy wanted to teach Sylvia how to do things, such as teaching her how to make a house. She made suggestions to Sylvia about the subject matter. The scene below captures the dialogue between Kathy and Sylvia. Kathy seems to be offering her own work as a model in helping scaffold Sylvia’s drawings. I also got the impression from Kathy’s tutoring of Sylvia that Kathy wanted to show Sylvia her ability to draw something else that she knew how to draw.

Kathy: What’s you are making, Sylvia?
Sylvia: I don’t know.
Kathy: How about a monster? Oh . . . I don’t know how to make a monster. What about a house? I can make a house. What’s yours, Sylvia? I think I can make a house. Do you want me to?
Sylvia: Yeah.
Kathy: Hey, Sylvia, come here, come here! Come here, come here, Sylvia. Do you like it? Sylvia, do you like it?
Sylvia: I got my name.
Kathy: I made pink. Look. Sylvia, I made pink right there.
Can I show you how I made it? Can I show you how I made it?
You know how I made it? You know how I made it?

In contrast to the previous episode, it is clear that the power dynamic had changed between Kathy and Sylvia. Kathy wanted to show her work to Sylvia, and it seemed that Kathy wanted Sylvia to compliment her. Kathy eagerly tried to show Sylvia how to make the color pink, but it was obvious that Sylvia was not interested.

When I interviewed Kathy, she said that she liked making art: “Hmmm . . . because I like painting. . . . I like painting. I like any painting.” However, she said that she rarely made art at home. Kathy loved showing her art to her father and mother, and her mother commented, “We praise her efforts and ask her general questions about her work, for example, ‘Can you tell me a little about it?’” (Interview with Kathy’s mother, February 22, 2008). In response to my interview questions, Kathy’s mother stated that art is important because “it is a way for her to express herself, especially since she cannot really use writing to do that yet. It is also good practice in being creative” (Interview with Kathy’s mother, February 22, 2008). She believed that Kathy made art “to communicate and to entertain herself, her peers, and adults around her” (Interview with Kathy’s mother, February 22, 2008). Kathy’s mother thought that children’s art was largely social or communicative, and that others offered feedback through verbal and nonverbal responses to the children’s art. Based on my interviews with and observations of Kathy, it seemed that Kathy’s family did not support her art making enthusiastically. This may be because, according to Kathy, she did not make art very often at home (Interview with Kathy, March 7, 2008). It was also my impression that her mother preferred being interviewed by me about Kathy’s art making via e-mail. Because of her full schedule as a working mother, she emphasized that she wanted to communicate with me through e-mail.

The picture below (Figure 12) is one of Kathy’s favorite drawing series, her family. I showed this picture to her mother as I asked the interview questions.
From her response, it was clear she understood the picture: “Kathy usually represents my husband and son with green because it is their favorite color. Pink is one of her favorite colors, so that is often what she uses to draw herself. She is aware of height differences between children and adults and often uses that in her drawings” (Interview with Kathy’s mother, February 22, 2008). Kathy’s mother was very satisfied with this drawing because she was pleased to see Kathy representing her family as happy and united.

**Sylvia**

Sylvia was the last participant to join my research group. One day when the twin brothers, Daniel and Edward, were late to school, I invited Kathy to do acrylic painting, but she wanted to play with the other girls in the carpeted area. Before that day, I had found that Kathy liked playing with girls far more than with boys, so I asked Sylvia to join us at the art table because she often participated in art activities when I prepared them. (To clarify the method used in this study, I opened up the art table to other students but collected primary data only on my focal students. Sylvia often came to the art table, made artwork, talked loudly, and laughed.) Sylvia was active and she talked a great deal, expressing her opinions without hesitation. She was loved by her female peers because of her lovely character (her sunny disposition and good sense of humor), and she was one of the girls who was close to
Kathy. After the decision to include Sylvia, I left a note for her family expressing my wish to invite her to join my research group. To make certain, I asked Sylvia if she would be willing to participate in my project, and she insisted that she would. She loved painting with colors: Whenever I brought the black-and-white materials, pastels, Play-Doh, and other art materials, Sylvia would always ask if I had brought any paint that day (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Sylvia’s untitled drawing, acrylic paint.

One of the noticeable things about Sylvia’s subject matter was that she chose relational subjects. She preferred drawing human figures, depicting those around her in her work, such as herself, her grandma, her grandpa, and her father (Figure 14). Sylvia’s choice of those around her as her subject matter, such as family, pets, and other close friends in the classroom, occurred from the beginning of the data generation process. Midway through my visits, she changed her strategy from making representations of her world to making art as abstract expressions, which is a reversal of the usual trajectory, considering that children generally make representations from the abstract to the detailed as they grow (C. Thompson, personal communication, March 2011).
On this particular day, Kathy was sick and the twin brothers did not arrive until I had finished and packed up the project. Sylvia wanted to make art with one of the new girls in the classroom named Lauren (pseudonym; i.e., she did not want to do art by herself). She explained to Lauren how to use pastels, but she strongly wanted to use paints. Therefore, I promised her I would bring the paints when we did the next project. In this drawing, she did not execute the figures in detail, except for her yellow self-portrait. The other subjects were drawn in massive forms, but she wanted to include her family in this picture (Figure 15). In particular, Sylvia preferred acrylic paint and fingerpaint, and she did not favor black-and-white projects, pastels, or markers. She also liked playing with various types of clay, including modeling clay, clay made with mud, flour dough, and Play-Doh.

At other times, she often drew herself, her mother, her older sister (8 years old), her father, and his girlfriend (her parents were divorced and shared the duty of picking up the sisters and dropping them off). She described her father’s girlfriend as skinny and good-looking because she worked out a lot.
Sylvia also followed her peers’ subject matter easily, but when she had difficulty making an image, she asked very directly for my help, for example, “Can you make a lion for me?” She had also asked me to draw things during an earlier drawing session. I think this was an important moment that captured Sylvia’s personality. I responded by showing her lions and polar bears, which she wanted to learn from me. She was the only person among my focal students and other students who asked me to demonstrate how to draw something, even though this would not be unusual for preschoolers, who sometimes want to have a reference to imitate. It could be something that she picked up at home or from her older sister. Sylvia liked her older sister, who she described as a pretty girl. Her sister was also enrolled in the after-school program, and I had a chance to meet Sylvia’s older sister, who had a similarly pretty face, red freckles, pale skin, and curly blonde hair.

Until halfway through my data collection, Sylvia was very enthusiastic about making representations. However, considering the fact that Sylvia was the youngest in the focal group, it was not surprising that she changed her art-making strategy from making detailed representations to making abstract paintings. She also produced drawings that were more
abstract regardless of the medium. Sylvia was more independent when she did more abstract work.

She often said, “No, I don’t know how to make it” in the middle of drawing something, or “I screwed up” in response to one of the other children, me, or sometimes herself. At these moments, we can see Sylvia’s struggle to draw something the way she envisioned it, since she was the youngest and perhaps the least clearly representational of the children. The episode below shows the change in how Sylvia processed her work.

Kathy: What are you drawing, Sylvia?
Sylvia: My dad.
Kathy: Daddy is yellow, isn’t he?
Sylvia: Yeah. . . . yellow. Yellow.
Kathy: I’m gonna paint my daddy. I’m gonna paint my mommy (with pink paint).
Fingerpainting. This has to be my mom.
(In the meantime, Sylvia picked up the same color as Kathy did, pink.)
Sylvia: This has to be totally my dad (showing Kathy her right index finger that had pink paint). Hey, what color is it?
Kathy: Ha ha ha (giggling). Your dad’s wig color is red?
Sylvia: It’s red. Daddy~ daddy~ (singing with rhymes).
Kathy: (Singing together with Sylvia) Daddy~ daddy, I’ll get a picture for you, daddy. Come on~
(Kathy and Sylvia were laughing together.)
Sylvia: I don’t have my daddy’s (something).
Kathy: This is a picture for my mom. It’s a hat, brown. Brown hat in a circle.
Me: What’s that, Sylvia?
Sylvia: Another daddy yellow (making a third green circle).
Kathy: (The) yellow is all messy now (referring to the fact that Sylvia’s yellow paint is not clean anymore). I’m gonna start with this finger.

(Kathy and Sylvia are showing their fingers to each other.)

Kathy: Two yellow pictures. Oh, no, my nails.

Sylvia: Oh. . . . Ho ho. . . . (laughing). Look (at) it. Look (at) it. Green. (She is messing up her first yellow picture with green paint.) I need to wash my hands (waving her fingers in the air).

Kathy: Look at my two fingers.

Sylvia: Look at mine.

Kathy: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We are messy. Oh, yeah (singing and dancing).

Me: Sylvia, can you explain what you drew?

Sylvia: This is like some water walls, there’s all wall.

Kathy: What about that?

Sylvia: That’s a wall, that’s a wall, that’s a wall, that’s a wall, and that’s a wall.

Kathy: What kind of wall is that? What kind of wall is that? What kind of wall is that?

(pointing at each wall)

Me: That’s a good question.

Sylvia: That’s the wall someone . . . You can’t see someone?
Kathy: I didn’t see the messages in all of that.

Sylvia: This one is fall.

Kathy: What? I was never told what kind of wall that was.

Sylvia: Ok. Ok. There’s someone . . . someone is just fooling around here (making circles as she is pointing at the picture).

Kathy: I didn’t see it. I only saw the big red one (critiquing Sylvia’s picture).

As shown in this scene, Sylvia first tried to make her dad with yellow fingerpaint. In the process of representing her dad, she decided to change the subject matter to colorful walls (Figure 16). When Kathy inquired about the character of each wall, Sylvia equivocated. In particular, it is difficult to make detailed representations using fingerpaint. However, this was not the only time when Sylvia changed her subject from representational to abstract. It often occurred when she had difficulty drawing something. On that particular day, Sylvia created her second drawing, the colorful hands, shortly thereafter (Figure 17).

![Figure 17. Sylvia’s Colorful Hands, fingerpaint.](image)

She seemed to have great fun using fingerpaint. About a week later, when I brought acrylic paint, Sylvia used the acrylic paint as fingerpaint and drew with her fingers instead of with brushes.
She had a sense of humor that came through in her pictures. For instance, when Daniel, Edward, and Sylvia shared the same subject, a polar bear, she suddenly claimed, “I’m making polar bear pee. It’s gonna be really fat, because a polar bear is really fat.” On another day, as she scribbled over her name, she commented, “I’m trying to kill my name” (Figure 15). She suddenly described what she was doing, and soon afterward, Kathy burst out in laughter in reaction to Sylvia’s comment.

Sylvia was not so happy when Kathy wanted to demonstrate to her how to draw. Whenever Kathy wanted to show her how to make a drawing, Sylvia refused this instruction from Kathy. Still, Kathy persisted. The scene below shows the tension that developed between Kathy and Sylvia.

Kathy: Can I see how tiny it is? Is there another window?
Sylvia: Oh. Yeah. . . . I will find that place.
Kathy: I can put the very tiny dots here. Can I show you?
Sylvia: No.
Kathy: Can I show you? Okay, I will try to show you on my paper. I will show you, okay?
You have to make a very tiny dot and then glue it on that paper and then try to put it here.
Sylvia: I’m done.

Sylvia always wanted to paint, and she liked to create colorful walls in her pictures. Below is an excerpt from our interview (Interview with Sylvia, March 14, 2008).

Me: Do you usually make art at home?
Sylvia: No, not that much.
Me: Not that much, why not?
Sylvia: Because we don’t have stuff to make art at home.
Me: When do you make art?
Sylvia: I would say weekends.
Me: Oh . . . weekends and in this classroom?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Me: What do you usually draw?

Sylvia: Pancakes.

Me: Pancakes?

Sylvia: Yeah, I can draw pancakes.

Me: After making this, will you show it to your mom and dad?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Me: Why?

Sylvia: Because I want them to see it.

Based on this interview with Sylvia, I began to suspect that she wanted to draw mainly what she could draw successfully (Figure 18). As time went by, she seemed to lack confidence at the art table. At the beginning of the research process, she did not hesitate to draw something, and she talked loudly about what her subject matter was and why she chose it. Perhaps because she was younger, she was feeling pushed to represent recognizable objects when she was not yet ready to do so, or in a way she was not yet ready to follow. Paint may have relieved her of that burden.

Me: It’s your picture; do you like it?

Sylvia: Uh huh.

Me: Why?

Sylvia: Because I like me.

Me: So . . . is that you?

Sylvia: That’s me and that’s my doggy.
Me: I know you like painting . . . Why do you like painting?
Sylvia: Because sometimes we have paint and I like the way to paint . . . It’s so exciting.

Other than those paintings, Sylvia wanted to play with shapes or wanted to stamp on them. Overall, she liked art making, especially painting, and she was happy with “art stuff” in the classroom. Despite the tensions that sometimes surfaced between Kathy and Sylvia, they continued to sit together at the art table.

**The Process of Generating Patterns of Verbal Utterances and Communicative Aspects in Art Making**

According to Glesne (2006),

In the early days of data collection, stories abound. Struck by the stories, you tell them and repeat them. You may even allow them to assume an importance beyond their worth to the purposes of the project. Making sense of the stories as a whole comes harder. You do not have to stop telling stories, but in data analysis you must make connections among the stories: What is being illuminated? How do the stories connect? What themes and patterns give shape to your data? Coding helps you to answer these questions. (p. 152)

Before identifying the emergent themes in videotaped episodes of classroom life, I grasped some of the main characteristics of the communication, such as the predominance of the interactive realm, the importance of self–other relationships to the child, features of the
relational aspects of the visual and verbal utterances, and the dialogicity in children’s visual images, as seen in the circulation of images and subjects. Based on the detection of these large themes, I completed an initial analysis, a discourse analysis of children’s talk and visual images. To explain the findings, some excerpts of talk and selected visual images were drawn from the whole data set. However, I decided that the best method for displaying the themes that emerged from the whole data set needed to be more systematic. One of the limitations of the initial analysis was that the images the children produced were not fully interpreted because of the very visible factor that children’s talk was used to interpret the visual images, so I decided to analyze the children’s drawing events in detail. My initial analysis focused mainly on the verbal discourse, even though I tried to incorporate an understanding of the visual images in that context. This was done because too many things were happening within a very short time. Thus, I progressed to reuniting the visual and verbal moves that occurred within each child’s art-making process. Thompson and Bales (1999) described a drawing event as follows:

Often, children’s thinking about the images they are drawing is available, not only in the drawings themselves (Forman, 1993), but also, and perhaps more explicitly, in the talk that accompanies drawing events. Because this private, planning speech conforms so closely to the style and structure of normal conversation, other children frequently overhear and respond to comments which may not have been intended as public statements. (p. 65)

Likewise, Thompson and Bales defined drawing events as places where a shared understanding and interactive influences happen with active and casual interactions among children when they are drawing together. In a similar fashion, I identified children’s art-making events as moments when communication, and miscommunication, occurred in their interactions with each other through sharing and understanding their thoughts and opinions,
or even mumbling what was on their minds. The process of creating visual images when making art together can be seen as a visual utterance, which includes the social interaction and the organization of experiences (Holland et al., 1998). From this point, I searched for communicative aspects of children’s art making, for multiple layers of children’s meaning making through their interactions with others, and for the different voices they portrayed through verbal and visual utterances when they were making art together.

Glesne (2006) stated the need for coding as follows:

Coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e., observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose. By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, you create an organizational framework. (p. 152)

After transcribing all the data from audio and video files, I looked at the whole set of data to focus on what was going on at the art table. I did an initial analysis of the transcripts and comments among my four focal students by making memos and writing down preliminary findings or intuitions from each scene. Based on my memos, I began to write down a list of findings I observed repeatedly. I also focused on who the students targeted in their communication, what kinds of interaction occurred, and which subjects they were talking about that appeared to influence others. Glesne (2006) explained the coding scheme as follows:

When you work with data gathered through qualitative inquiry, each major code should identify a concept, a central idea, through not necessarily a chapter or section of the final product. . . . There should be as many major codes as needed to subsume all of the data, appreciating that more may develop than will hold up as separate codes. (p. 153)
Therefore, I recognized that I needed to find what was shown in their pictures and what they were talking about at the art table. Their utterances, including their verbalizations and evolving images, were creating the series of art-making events. I organized a draft of the findings explaining what kinds of communicative aspects could be seen, based on the data.

One clear example of coding is the work of Anne Dyson (1986) on writing, in her article “Transitions and Tensions: Interrelationships Between the Drawing, Talking, and Dictating of Young Children.” Dyson developed five categories of children’s use of talk during early writing process:

1. Representational language: language used to give information about events and situations, real or imaginary,
2. Directive language: language used to direct the actions of self and/or others,
3. Heuristic language: language used to seek information,
4. Personal language: language used to express one’s feelings and attitudes, and
5. Interactional language: language used to initiate, maintain, and terminate social relationships. (p. 386)

Based on the research of Dyson (1983, 1986) on children’s early writing process and the use of art in the early symbolic process, I developed the following table from the coding schemes Dyson developed. I analogized the subcategories of children’s talk shown in her two papers, but this condensation does not represent her entire coding scheme.

Table 2

_Coding Themes Deducded from the Writing of Anne Dyson (1983, 1986)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of talk</th>
<th>Function or strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Representational</td>
<td>Reporting, narrating, reasoning, labeling, dramatizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive language</td>
<td>Planning, monitoring, encoding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic language</td>
<td>Seeking information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I combined the scattered coding information from her papers. For example, in her original data display, she inserted the coding themes of “representational language: reporting,” “representational language: narrating,” and so forth in explaining the verbal communication of children. I collected her coding schemes to create Table 1; these did not include my own wording.

In the first version of the themes emerging from children’s verbal utterances, I divided their statements into the five major themes of self-talk, social talk, art-related talk, play talk, and personal stories. The idea of self-talk was related to the notion of self-regulatory talk (Thompson & Bales, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962). Further, I referred to Deborah Duncan’s dissertation, *Children’s Discourse in the Margins of Classroom Instruction: Influence on Literacy Learning* (2007). In her dissertation, Duncan researched children’s discourse in reading and writing classes. She classified student–student discourse in literacy practices into personal or experiential stories, self-talk, play talk, “accelerated reader talk,” and “warning: impending adult talk.” “Accelerated reader talk” was defined when children used the term *accelerated reader* (or AR), a program for monitoring daily reading progress, when referring to an assignment or an assessment. Duncan viewed the classroom as composed of two divided worlds, the world of children and the world of adults. “Warning: impending adult talk” originated from Duncan’s observation of the speech children used when they did want not to call an adult’s attention to their world. She observed the patterns of “direct warning,” “addressing adult to divert attention,” “indirect but adult intended,” and “silence/nonverbal” in the category of “warning: impending adult talk.” I adopted the ideas of self-talk, play talk, social talk, and personal stories in creating the main thematic patterns and added the pattern of art-related talk in categorizing students’ verbal utterances. I identified
children’s verbal utterances based, in part, on the person to whom they directed their talk. If they directed the talk toward themselves, I categorized it as self-talk. Social talk was one of the most frequent types of talk during the art-making process, and it corresponded to Pearson’s (2001) argument that children’s art functions as a social practice. In addition, I identified instances in which children appeared to be seeking acceptance from an adult or directing commentaries to peers as recurrent behaviors, belonging to the category of social talk. Once the main patterns of verbal utterances were developed, I sorted my memos and identified patterns to make subcategories. The communicative aspects of children’s art making and visual utterances were intended to focus on the images the children created. As stated earlier, in my initial analysis of the transcripts, I encountered the limitation of my ability to discuss the images and the progression of the art-making event in detail because I was mainly focusing on the verbal discourses. The category of visual utterances could be understood as the focused, emergent themes used to understand children’s art-making process through an emphasis on visual images. Once I had identified the problem in my initial analysis, I returned to check the videotapes, looking at the images to describe the evolution of the visual, the gestures, marks, accompanying conversations, and context.

I initially placed singing in the category of self-talk because the student seemed to be “talking” to himself or herself, but I later changed this pattern of singing to play talk because it had more of the characteristics of play. There were a few garbage codings, which I did not use, such as personification (e.g., when a child gave the bear in her picture a name). If it did not happen more than five times, it fell into the category of garbage coding.

Here, I would like to emphasize that my generated themes were intended to capture the phenomena of the situated context, action, and discourses. The process of coding and sorting the findings was not intended to break down the talk and situation into decontextualized units. Rather, it was meant to identify or call attention to what was going on
when the children were engaged in making art. I also wanted to illustrate vividly that in a single instance of discourse, many purposes and meanings were apparent. In one episode of talk, there were overlapping coding themes. Thus, the purpose of coding in this study was not to break down the moment into its component parts, but rather to indicate the multiple layers and kinds of communication that were constantly occurring around the art table.

Further, the themes emerging from children’s verbal utterances and the communicative aspects of their art making were developed from the whole data set. Later, in the following chapter, one child’s art-making process is described at length. This was intentionally chosen to focus close up on the art-making and image-creation process of only one child. However, I want to emphasize that the findings for children’s visual and verbal utterances were obtained from all four focal students.

Numerous studies have researched children’s art over the centuries. In the history of research on children, the development of drawing became a central issue in relation to human intelligence. In recent years, researchers have identified cultural influences as definitive in children’s artistic development. Most recently, one of the major impacts on research of children’s art has been the Reggio Emilia approach, in its recognition of the circulation of visual images and the multiple languages that children use, in addition to and in combination with verbal discourses. Furthermore, literature has emerged that values context in drawing events, which has drawn attention to children’s talk in descriptive studies on how children draw together (Dyson, 1990; Thompson, 1999; Thompson & Bales, 1991; Zurmuehlen, 1990). The existing theories now account for the presence of self talk, symbolic art making based on Vygotsky’s perspective, developmental aspects of art making, and contextual influences on art making (including the act of copying). However, to date, little attention has been paid to understanding what is really going on in children’s art-making process. Many descriptive studies have been done on young children’s art making in terms of the role of interactions and
the cultural influences on their art making, but these have mainly focused on either the visual or the verbal discourses. This indicates a need to understand the multiple layers of children’s art making and the complex process of creating visual images. The aim of this study was to comprehend the process of art making in the context of the early childhood classroom, and to look at the communicative aspects of children’s simultaneous creation of verbal and visual discourses. Documenting the process of emergence of both the verbal and visual utterances is unique to my study. The coding schemes were developed out of the need to identify what was going on at the art table in an inclusive manner. Because of the large size of this data set, coding was inevitable as a means of displaying the data. This research broadens the understanding of children’s art-making process by taking a close-up and inclusive view. In valuing the context and identifying the different voices in children’s art making, I draw on Bakhtin’s theory as well as other significant theories to validate the existence of various communicative aspects in relation to children’s art making and to fill in gaps in the literature by extending or correcting previous work that has identified several aspects of these art-making events, but often as discreet elements held up for analysis one by one.

**Emergent Themes of Children’s Utterances During Art Making**

The utterance implies a context of responses to dialogues and communication through various forms of language and other cultural tools. This section identifies the types of utterances that occurred as the participants were creating their visual artwork. Their utterances fell into two main categories: verbal and visual utterances. In the category of verbal utterances, I identified five patterns in children’s discourse: talk to self, social talk, play talk, personal stories, and art-related talk. In addition, I later identified a system of rules governing the communicative aspects of children’s visual art that were represented in their art making, which I categorized as citations, personal stories, imagination/personification,
inclusion of other voices, and addressivity. I classified patterns that indicated how both the verbal and visual languages were used during art making. Overall, social talk and art-related talk were predominant over other types of dialogue in their verbal utterances.

Children’s art serves as a series of visual utterances that function in the social context of the art-making process. While making art, the children engaged in active communication through dialogues, actions, and visual art making, and they seemed to respond to each other. The visual utterances developed as distinct from the categories of verbal utterances as the children were concentrating on the act of visual image creation, the stories behind the images, and a focused art-making event. It was aimed to capture the generation of the image, including the verbal discourses, the nonverbal interaction, and the context, to elucidate what was going on in the children’s process of creating visual images. The reason I separated the verbal utterances and visual utterances was not because of an intention to separate the verbal and visual discourse, but to identify important phenomena, communication, and interactions to understand the art-making process in depth. The children’s drawings were products of their community (in this case, the classroom), and contextual and configurational signs were represented in the children’s art. When identifying the visual utterances, I also focused on the kinds of phenomena that were shown during the art-making process, what kinds of voices could be detected, and how the children communicated in their art making. Above all, I investigated the communicative aspects of their visual utterances in context.

**Verbal Utterances**

Table 3

*Verbal Utterances That Occurred During Children’s Art-Making Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse pattern</th>
<th>1. Self-talk</th>
<th>a. Spelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Talk to self</td>
<td>1. Self-talk</td>
<td>b. Mumbling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Social talk</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Directed to adult</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Verifying (confirming instructions and permissions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Seeking recognition from adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Informing what another student is doing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Ms. Sue. Look at him. He made tiny dots.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“He mixed all the colors”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Peer-to-peer utterances</strong></td>
<td>a. Developing a sense of sameness with peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Addressing suspicion/showing concern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Competing with each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Art-related talk</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Instructional dialogues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Sharing discoveries (techniques)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Materials-related talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Asking help/posing questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Reporting problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2. Explanatory statements</strong></td>
<td>a. Explanation of a work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the children were making art, many things were occurring at the art table. There were many ambivalent incidents in which the children had different purposes for their utterances and actions. In this section, I identify categories of verbal utterances that occurred during children’s art-making process, based on the data analysis. Twenty-three patterns of verbal utterances were identified in how children used their words. Among the coding schemes developed, social talk and art-related talk were predominant in terms of their frequency and kinds of patterns. The patterns of verbal utterances are presented with an explanation of the findings and with excerpts from the transcripts to help understand each type of talk.

1. **Talk to Self.**

When children spoke to themselves, I coded this as talk to self. It happened frequently when they wrote their names, as they pronounced the spelling of their names letter by letter. This type of talk was also observed when children reflected on their artistic process both positively and negatively, either complimenting themselves or critiquing what they had done by mumbling or using self-regulatory talk. I used this category when children produced
utterances without thinking about the presence of an audience or the audience’s comprehension.

1. **Spelling**


It was common to notice that children voiced the spellings of their names to ensure they were right about them. Usually at the end of art making, they marked their names on their papers. Considering that the participants were 4 to 5 years of age, spelling their name was valuable for them at that moment. In my observations, they included short familiar phrases, such as mommy, daddy, and even their peers’ names.

1.2. **Mumbling**

Daniel: I’m gonna make black, because it’s out in space and it’s no light there.

Me: So, you know that space is black, right?

Daniel: Mhmm. . . . (agreement). Only dark. Dark only~ dark only~ dark only~ dark only~ (mumbling, at the same time coloring dark colors all over the paper).

Edward: Mixing it, mixing it, mixing it.

In the above utterance, Edward repeated the talk about his actions without considering whether an audience was present. He reproduced these phrases several times when he had the opportunity to use paint. On this particular day, after hearing Edward’s repeated utterances, “Mixing it, mixing it, mixing it,” Sylvia also expressed, “Stirring, stirring, stirring . . .”

When the children talked to themselves, they automatically became both the speaker and the listener as they created their own voices (Duncan, 2007). Authoring their utterances and voices had a self-regulatory function. This was observed during the middle of the process, when the children were acquiring knowledge and information. As the children were mastering literacy and art, they were learning a mode of culture that involved inquiring of
themselves about their actions. When they soliloquized, they reproduced explanations of their actions without a purpose.

1.c. Self-Regulatory Talk

Kathy: My dad is tall.

Noah: Mine too. Mine is three-five.

Kathy: He is going to have big hands. I am making this for the whole family. I need to have him all the way up here because he is bigger than me.

When Kathy drew her whole family, she directed talk to herself to solve the problem of how to fit her entire family on the paper (Figure 19). She created this family picture with brushes and watercolor paint. While making her family picture, she visualized her representation of her daddy as a big figure.

When children spoke to themselves when reflecting on their artistic process or solving problems, I coded this type of talk as self-regulatory talk. During the art-making process, self-talk was one of the central types of talk in the practices around the art table. When considering that the data collection was done in a classroom setting with 4- and 5-year-olds, the high frequency of self-talk was not surprising. Previous studies have investigated the phenomenon of children’s self-talk, which is unique to preschoolers of this age. Jean Piaget claimed that children are highly egocentric below the age of 6. Piaget carefully observed the occurrences of children’s egocentric speech that happened during learning. Similarly,
Vygotsky (1962) paid attention to the use of children’s talk to self, naming it private speech but focusing on its self-regulatory and reflective function. According to Thompson and Bales (1991), it is speech that is “reflective or self-regulatory, marking those points in an activity when a child confronts a problem which requires thoughtful resolution” (p. 46). This type of self-regulatory talk is very often mistaken for social speech, but children’s talk to self is very clear. When self-regulatory talk happened, it opened up a stream of social talk with responses by others. Even though self-regulatory talk could easily be mistaken for social talk, it was evident that it was self-regulatory talk that was directed to the self. When Kathy mentioned that her daddy was tall, Noah (pseudonym) quickly responded to her, providing the fact that his dad was also tall.

2. Social Talk

Social talk was one of the primary forms of talk noted during art activities. Social talk was largely divided into two types, utterances directed to an adult and peer-to-peer utterances. Thirteen patterns of social talk were identified, five directed to adults and eight peer-to-peer utterances. The patterns of social talk are shown below.

2.1 Utterances Directed to an Adult

2.1.a. Verification (Confirming Instructions and Permissions)

Sylvia: Can we mix it together?
Me: Um hmm. (agreement)
Sylvia: Awesome, I want to mix it together.

Verification talk was presented when children inquired about information, asked permission, and sought knowledge to obtain clarification of the process, materials, and methods in their art making.
2.1.b. Seeking Recognition from Adults

Daniel: Look at my alien. Look at my alien. Look at my alien. (He first lifts the picture up and then pushes it toward me. Finally, he stands up to show it to me.) It’s a person and it’s on the back. (He means the Asian paper is thin and he can see the picture on the back too.)

“Look at my picture” was one of the most frequently used phrases at the art table. The remark was clearly aimed at getting attention from adults. Daniel kept checking other people’s responses and what they thought of his art. From this, we can infer how children use the arts for social exchange in an effort to be accepted by others. It could be that they just wanted their work to be admired or that they were really looking for a larger sense of affirmation of their worth or their accomplishment.

2.1.c. Informing an Adult About What Another Student Was Doing

“Ms. Sue. Look at him. He made tiny dots.”

“He mixed all the colors.”

These remarks were found when children reported misconduct or commented on the work done by their peers. When they thought their friends broke the rules, they informed the teachers about what had happened. They also called teachers’ attention to their friends’ work.

2.2. Peer-to-Peer Utterances

This section lists the criteria for and examples of student-to-student utterances.

2.2.a. Developing a Sense of Sameness with Peers

Occasionally, I observed the children developing a sense of sameness with peers. When these children wanted to gain favor from their peers, they followed their peers’ actions, subject matter, and talk, as illustrated below.

Kathy: I’m gonna make what Sylvia is gonna make. I’m gonna make what she is gonna make. You can see my fingers.

Sylvia: I need one more color to make that. Something really cool.
Kathy: I’m gonna make what you are gonna make.

2.2.b. Addressing Suspicion/Showing Concern

As other children expressed doubt, the child engaged in art making would confront the others’ remarks and the production of visual art made by others.

Edward: Here is a duck alien, a monster.

Gracie: Whoever cares about the monster? Do you wanna be like a monster? I think they have some lips on it.

Edward: (no response to Gracie)

Me: Why do you like monsters?

Edward: I’m making this monster because I like it.

Me: Why do you like it?

Edward: Because I thought about it. I thought about to do this color, because there are . . . I want all the different colors together. Look at this . . . it’s like a green . . . (pointing to the palette).

When Gracie (pseudonym) showed doubt about Edward’s favorite subject matter, monsters, Edward ignored her and then, to justify his choices to the other children, he tried to tell her that he was drawing a monster because he liked them and that green was cool.

2.2.c. Competing with Each Other


Edward: My sister is the messiest in the world. I think my daddy is too. Hey, look. It’s messy green.

Kathy: I’m drawing my mom.

Edward: It’s green. Messy\textsuperscript{up} green. (high-pitched voice)
They sometimes challenged each other to show their superiority over others. In the episode above, it is clear that Edward was trying to compete with Kathy in drawing his family’s messiness.

3. Art-Related Talk

I identified utterances as art-related talk when the conversations were closely directly to the art-making process. I divided art-related talk into the subcategories of instructional dialogues, explanatory statements, and positioning remarks. This is different from self-regulatory talk because art-related talk has more social characteristics, and children clearly recognize the existence of a listener.

3.1. Instructional Dialogues

3.1. a. Sharing Discoveries (Techniques)
Kathy: What did you mix to make the pink?
Edward: This (He is pointing at the water. . . . He just uses the water as it is.) . . . and then it’s pink!
Kathy: You made that!

It was interesting to see how the children shared discoveries during the art-making process. When they made their own discoveries (i.e., how to make pink out of red and white), they were eager to share these with their peers.

3.1.b. Materials-Related Talk
Edward: Daniel, may I have the brown crayon?
Daniel: Sure. (giving it to Edward)
Me: Wow, that’s nice of you.

It was common for the participants to ask about materials or share their thoughts about the medium.
3.1.c. Asking Help/Questions

Edward: Daniel, how did you fold it up? Daniel, how did you make that robot?

Daniel: You just paint it and fold it up. See?

The scene above describes Edward questioning Daniel about his art-making process. For instructional help, they asked questions of both the adults and their peers to find out what they wanted to know.

3.1.d. Reporting Problems

Sylvia: I need one more color to make that. Something really cool.

Kathy: Oh, I need some pinks.

Sylvia: I need to have another paper. I screwed it up!

Me: I don’t think you screwed it up. Why do you think you screwed it up?

Sylvia: Because . . . I like that color (as she points to the lower part of a red circle), but I don’t like that color (pointing to the upper red part). (She seems not to like the red color she mixed.)

Different from the category of asking help/posing questions, I coded reporting problems when children explained their problems. In the above transcript, Sylvia explained in detail why she felt she “screwed up” her painting. This would be a wonderful opportunity to investigate how the children viewed their failures by looking at the various reasons they gave.

3.2. Explanatory Statement

3.2.a. Explanation of Works

Edward: Daniel, why did you use yellow?

Daniel: Because, I’m making a walrus. . . . It’s because it’s not brown.

In this scene, Daniel described why he used the color yellow when drawing a walrus. He provided the reason that the walrus was not brown. The children sometimes made statements
in response to a question posed by another child or an adult. Often, the children provided explanations without being prompted.

3.3. Positioning Remarks

3.3.a. Critique

Daniel: Look at Sylvia’s pancake. (laughing)
Sylvia: That’s ok.

Sometimes, a child would make fun of another’s work. Particularly when the children thought another child’s representation did not resemble the subject, they teased the child. There could be both an initiation and a response in the process of critique. Daniel made fun of Sylvia’s pancake, calling others’ attention to it, but Sylvia later explained that her pancakes had strawberries on the top.

3.3.b. Compliment

Daniel: How can you make it really good? (to Kathy. He is pointing at a part of Kathy’s drawing)
Kathy: What? This is just because . . . (squaring her right shoulder)

3.3.c. Negotiation

Kathy: What’s that you are making, Sylvia?
Sylvia: I don’t know.
Kathy: How about a monster? Oh. . . . I don’t know how to make a monster. What about a house? I can make a house. What’s yours, Sylvia? I think I can make a house. Do you want me to?
Sylvia: Yeah.
Kathy: Ok. I need a square. . . .

The transcript above shows a moment of negotiation between Kathy and Sylvia. It is interesting to see that Kathy invited Sylvia to choose her theme.
3.3.d. Commentary

Sometimes children competed with each other. To assert their superiority over others, they reciprocated by offering commentaries.

Edward: I’m making a tail.
Me: Daniel, I really like your snake.
Edward: That’s a snake but I don’t see any snake there.
Daniel: Edward is making a walrus.
Edward: Look at my walrus.
Me: It’s your walrus?
Edward: Yeah.
Me: It has eyes?
Daniel: Look at my eyes. (He may be talking about the eyes on his snake.) I made a cube.

When I complimented Daniel on his snake, Edward questioned whether it was a fake snake or a real snake. As Edward reacted directly to the praise given to his brother Daniel, he shared an opposing opinion about it.

4. Play Talk

It was obvious that the children were having playful moments in creating visual art. I coded utterances as play talk when the children played with rhymes, when they teased each other, and when they shared fun in the group.

4.1. Sharing Fun

The following episode, for example, was coded as play talk: sharing fun.

Kathy: I know how to use the paint.
Sylvia: I know it too.
Kathy: I love to paint.
Mrs. Geetika: Me too!
Sylvia: Me too!
Kathy: Me, Me!! Me four.
Sylvia: Me too! (swinging her brush from left to right)
Kathy: I’m five! I mean I’m one!
Sylvia: Ok. One, two, and three. (pointing to herself, Kathy, and Mrs. Geetika with the brush)
You know, one, two, and yeah three. One, two, three. (Kathy and Mrs. Geetika are laughing.)
Kathy: You know, actually, one (pointing at Sylvia with her index finger), two (pointing at herself), and four! (pointing at Mrs. Geetika). (Kathy laughs.)
Me: Ha-ha. There are three though.
Sylvia: One, two, four! (laughing)

Whereas the above scene shows children playing with words and numbers, the next case indicates play talk in relation to art materials.

4.2. Teasing
Kathy: Look at the X that I made. (She means the track of glue that she put it on.) Feel the giant X that I made. (She put a giant red square on the paper.)
Sylvia: Whew! . . . you made Baba. Ba-ga-ba-ba!
Kathy: Baba?

4.3. Singing
Singing a song was also classified under the category of play talk.
Edward: I want to make a walrus.
Me: Walrus?
Edward: Hollywood ticket . . . Holly wood ticket . . . (singing a song)
Kathy: Na-nan-a-na-na . . . (singing). (She is putting a large square shape on the paper.) I’m making a house. I’m making a house. I’m making a . . . I’m making a house.
Sometimes this type of utterance was directly related to the process or the content of art making, such as when they teased others in talking about the subject of their art making or when they shared fun in the process. Singing was first identified as a form of self-talk, but this was later changed to the category of play talk because the talk had a more playful quality.

5. Personal Stories

I coded utterances as personal stories when the children shared their previous experiences and everyday lives. Usually, their personal stories served primarily to initiate subject matter for their visual art. Their personal stories were primary initiating subjects in their visual art.

5.1. Prior Experience

Daniel: You know I’m making a snake. One day, my mom made cookies.

Daniel made a connection with his prior experience of playing with flour dough. On this particular day, flour dough was given to him as an art material, and he recalled that his mother used flour dough to make cookies.

5.2. Sharing Preferences

Me: What are you making, Kathy?
Daniel: She is always making her mom.
Kathy: Yes, because I like my mom. I’m making my mom.
Me: Daniel, you really like dinosaurs.
Daniel: Yeah, I do.
Me: Why?
Daniel: Because it’s so exciting. . . .
Edward: But he never saw one.
Daniel: Yeah, but I love all kinds of dinosaurs. That’s why I draw dinosaurs.
At the art table, children talked many times about what they liked to draw. For example, Kathy always wanted to draw her family. Daniel and Edward loved making dinosaurs, aliens, and monsters. As they shared their preferences, other children were influenced.

**Communicative Aspects in Children’s Art/Visual Utterances**

Children’s art can be seen as a visual language that originates in and contributes to the community. Bakhtin (1981) regarded any utterance as inseparably linked to the society. In Bakhtin’s view, “I,” as the independent and unrestrained person, makes meaning in interacting with others and creates the design of the world. In this sense, “I” am using other preexisting cultural tools in authoring the world. Compared with Vygotsky(1978), who considered language as a cultural symbol and semiotic system, Bakhtin was attentive to the more active and subjective use of language by individual “I”s. In this sense, the issues of quotation from other sources, our dependence on prior texts and images, and the orchestration of other voices are also discussed in searching for the communicative aspects. Likewise, children’s visual utterances have a social and contextual nature. In this study, visual images were interpreted according to how the children’s art served as a series of visual utterances that functioned as conversation or monologues in the social context of the art-making process. Using these criteria to define visual languages, I mainly interpreted what was shown in children’s art making (the subjects of their work) and the kinds of phenomena that were observed during the process. As Dyson (1989) noted, children’s talk supports their meaning making through the use of visual images. Interesting studies have been conducted on how children’s talk and actions interact during a drawing event (Thompson & Bales, 1991). Based on this perspective, I analyzed children’s art-making process by looking closely at and
valuing the fluidity of their communication and interaction. Thus, this study focused on the visual images and the discourse created during the process.

During the art-making process, I classified children’s visual utterances into the categories of inner communication, person-to-person communication, and drawing on the larger social discourse. These classifications were derived from participants’ subject matter, the children’s remarks about their artwork, and distinguishing phenomena that occurred during the art-making process. To analyze the children’s artwork, visual utterances were targeted for a deeper interpretation than art-related talk, which made it possible to understand the context of the art-making process and the meaning they sought in their visual art making.

Table 4

Communicative Aspects in Children’s Art/Visual Utterances

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<td>b. Mystifying/fantasy</td>
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6. Internal Communication

I identified an act as internal communication when children played with the expressive realm to make abstract paintings or to decorate their artwork. I also classified their communication as storytelling when they made up their own stories through visual art. The pattern of storytelling was divided into four categories: concretization, mystifying/fantasy, transformation, and succession. The phenomenon of inner communication was one of the predominant patterns throughout the entire visual art-making process. In dividing the larger categories of inner communication, person-to-person communication, and drawing on larger social discourses, I first detected person-to-person communication. Inner communication was recognized by the fact that it included implicit internalization in the form of expression and storytelling of a complicated nature. The category of storytelling was identified as inner communication, even though the child could have been influenced previously by other factors (peers or other cultural sources). I decided to include it as inner communication because the child internalizes the story and reproduces his or her own version of the story and represents it in his or her art.

6.1. Expression

The pattern of expression was shown when the children negotiated forms, textures, and materials. On several occasions, I found that the participants were focused on playing with this artistic moment.
6.1.a. Improvising

Daniel: Look at how much glue I am using.

Me: I think that is too much, Daniel. Oh, what are you making?

Daniel: I am making only shapes.

Me: Only shapes?

In the account above, Daniel wanted to experiment with shapes (Figure 20). Sometimes, the children wanted to play with materials or shapes without making a certain subject. I named this phenomenon of children’s solitary art-making process improvising. This type of art-making process was often observed when they explored the use of paint, fingerpaint, or clay.

6.1.b. Decoration

Figure 21. Sylvia holding her decorated ornaments, painted with acrylic paint.
Sylvia: It’s good because the blue looks like the sky.

Kathy: Can I do the other side too?

Me: Yeah. Remember, Sylvia, you have another side too.

Sylvia: I don’t want to do it because I don’t want it to be messed up.

Me: Once you’ve decorated, what about drawing something on your decoration? Can you do that, Sylvia?

Sylvia: No, I just wanna paint.

Kathy: That’s what I wanna do too.

Me: Because it’s decoration?

Sylvia: Because I wanna do it so pretty and drawing something is gonna ruin it.

On this particular day, I provided the children with premade star-shaped and round-shaped ornaments. Each ornament had a string so that the children could hang their finished decorations after they finished the activity (Figure 21). The art table was set up with the ornaments and acrylic paint. I tried to induce the participants to draw a picture on their ornaments, but they wanted to continue decorating them only with paint. It was interesting to observe that they preferred decoration to drawing a picture in this case. Moreover, Sylvia thought drawing a picture might ruin her work in this case. The children were making definite decisions about the aesthetic value of one medium over another in terms of a particular piece of work, among the values of representation, improvisation, and decoration.

6.2. Storytelling

During the art-making process, the children were sometimes actively creating stories in their artwork. These occasionally reflected preferences or tastes in their everyday lives. They often revisited existing stories and revised them according to their own desires. I coded an utterance as storytelling when they used their own voices in the creation of a visual artwork that was accompanied by verbal storytelling.
6.2.a. Concretization (Developing More Details)

They amplified their work through the stories they told about it.

*Figure 22. Daniel’s Sea.*

Me: Daniel, are you making another sea again?

Daniel: Yeah. I’m making the pitch. I’m making it tiny.

The children played with fingerpaint at the art table. Daniel created an abstract sea as he was playing with his hands and making sounds (Figure 22). Before Daniel made this sea, Kathy had drawn the waves in a large lake in the picture. However, he recognized the features of the sea in development. He identified this as the sea when I asked him. Below is another example of concretization.

Me: What are you drawing?

Edward: A . . . a monster.

*Figure 23. Edward’s Scarier Things Than a Monster.*

Edward: (He is looking around to check where I am.) It’s not really a monster.

Me: Oh?

Edward: ’Cause, monsters don’t have that kind of feet and now I’m making his hair. Making something scarier. (He is painting with a very dark brown color to make the subject scary.)

Me: Making something scary?

Edward: Scary! (making several wide brushstrokes)

Edward gave the character more details in the interest of making the thing scarier than a monster (Figure 23).

6.2.b. Mystifying/Fantasy

Daniel: Look what I made. I’m making an airplane. It is an airplane. It’s a magical airplane. I am going to color it now. I thinking of the color blue.

The criterion of mystifying/fantasy was developed to define the phenomenon of children’s creation of fantasy (Figure 24). They projected many stories into their art making with a twist of fantasy.

When the children developed stories in the imaginary realm, I identified these with the code of storytelling. In their visual representations, their stories were fluid because their subjects were often transformed and changed. It was interesting to observe the fluidity of the...
story and the ways they continued to add characters and embellish the work in response to what they recognized in the beginning of their drawings (C. Thompson, personal communication, October 2009). Furthermore, by adding characters, they explored their own imagination.

6.2.c. Transformation

The continuous changes in the children’s subjects as they made their artwork were identified as a process of transformation. For example, they named the same objects differently at different points in the development of their work. Cases of transformation were often observed in children’s art making. The children changed their minds several times in the course of making one object or the images in paintings or drawings.

Sylvia: I need one more color to make that. Something really cool.
Kathy: I’m going to make what you are going to make.
Sylvia: I’m going to make it colorful.
Kathy: That’s my Play-Doh man. (showing hers to Sylvia)
Me: Sylvia, what are you going to make?
Kathy: (kneading the dough again) Just I don’t like this. . . . So I smashed it down. . . .
(Because Kathy’s work does not get any attention from others, she destroys what she made and makes all the dough into one piece.)
Sylvia: I’m gonna make pancakes.
Me: Ok. (laughing) Pancakes with strawberries on top, maybe?
Sylvia: I'm gonna put green over the pink and then pink over the green. That’s gonna be really . . . (overlapping with noise, so sentence is inaudible)
Kathy: You are gonna mix it up?
Sylvia: Yeah.
Kathy: Oh, no.
Sylvia: Can I mix it up?

Me: Kathy, that’s really cute. Are you going to make pancakes, too?

Kathy: I’m gonna make a bracelet, too.

Figure 9. Kathy’s Pancake and Bracelet, Play-Doh.

Kathy followed Sylvia’s lead in making pancakes, but then she created her own bracelet (Figure 9). Kathy followed several processes in choosing the subject matter. She created her own subject, a snowman, but she was not satisfied with it because no one paid attention to her work. She then announced that she wanted to make what her friend was making. In this scene, note the transformative process of the subject matter. After Kathy made the same subject as her friend did, she continued to create her own theme. I interpreted her action to indicate that once she felt safe by executing a similar subject matter, she could proceed to make her own space. It is interesting that she selected the bracelet after making the pancakes. In terms of shape, her pancakes and bracelet shared a circular form.

Cases of transformation happened in various ways, depending on the given material and themes. I interpreted children’s art making as being fluid in a number of clearly identifiable ways. Thus, the category of transformation includes children’s assessment of the difficulty of the task they have chosen for themselves, the flexibility of the medium itself, their admiration for a friend’s ideas, or a combination of these factors.
6.2.d. Succession (Making a Series on the Same or a Similar Subject)

Edward: Look at my gorilla. He is stunning. (pointing at the red gorilla in the picture)

I’m drawing another gorilla. I’m drawing a chimp now.

Me: Edward, is it your other gorilla? (referring to Edward’s beloved stuffed animal)


![Figure 25. The series of gorillas Edward created while adding details to his drawing.](image)

Such incidents of succession were often observed throughout the entire data-collection process (Figure 25). The children liked to create the same or a similar subject because they liked to draw what they could draw or what they liked to draw. In addition, it seems that they were perfecting or practicing valuable skills.

Here is another example of Kathy’s succession of drawings.

![Figure 26. Kathy’s Family. Markers on the paper.](image)
It is interesting to see that in Kathy’s picture, she draws a picture of herself and others, for example, Kathy and her mom, Kathy and her dad, and Kathy and her brother (Figure 26). She drew individual relationships rather than the family as a whole. Based on these drawings, we can guess her feeling toward her family. She described herself as smaller than the others in her family because she is the youngest.

7. Person-to-Person Communication

I identified an utterance as person-to-person communication when the children were actively negotiating, accepting, and sharing their voices through their visual art.

7.1. Intersubjectivity

7.1.a. Sharing Knowledge

Daniel: Now there’s other snakes in the water.
Kathy: Is that a snake? (pointing to the lower left part of the picture) That snake is quite long.
Daniel: They are riding in the water.
Kathy: What?
Daniel: They are all riding in the water. That one (pointing to the center) refuses to get out of the water and it goes away. . . .
Kathy: Mm hmm. (shaking her head in agreement with Daniel’s explanation)
Daniel: . . . They are boa constrictors. Cause they are swimming snakes.
Kathy: I know . . . they are boa constrictors.
Daniel: Yeah. (in agreement)
Kathy: They are boa constrictors in the water?
Daniel: They are pulling in the water. See?
Daniel provided Kathy with knowledge of the subject. As Daniel began using the term boa constrictors and explaining more about the behavior of the snakes, Kathy began to understand the information Daniel was providing her while he was drawing the subject (Figure 27). In this scene, Daniel used a combination of the visual and the verbal to clarify the subject for others.

7.2. Addressivity (Reciprocal Process)

7.2.a. Copying and Exchanging Subjects with Peers

Edward: I made green! (out of blue and yellow) Daniel, look at what I’m doing. I’m using my whole hand. (rubbing his whole right hand on the paper)

Once Daniel observed what his twin brother was doing, Daniel immediately performed the same action (Figure 28).

Daniel joined in Edward’s method of art making, and Kathy also joined the action by using both hands. Copying was one of the most frequent incidents in the children’s art making. It
happened when they chose the subject matter, when they observed the way their peers created art, and in many other cases.

7.3. Self–Other Relationship

Among my participants, the role of others functioned most strongly in Kathy’s art making. For example, she asked Sylvia questions about which color would be good to work with. The following transcript is an excerpt from an interview with Kathy (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Kathy’s House and Tree.

Me: Kathy, can you explain your picture?
Kathy: This is a tree, and this is a house. . . . Sylvia wants me to make it pink.
Me: When do you make art usually? Do you make art at home?
Kathy: No, not that much.
Me: So in school usually?
Kathy: Uh hum. (agreement)
Me: Do you remember what you usually draw?
Kathy: I usually draw my family.
Me: Why?
Kathy: They love it.
Once I asked Kathy why she always drew her family, and she responded that she drew her family because her family loved to see her pictures of them.

Me: So, after showing your letters to them, do they like it?

Kathy: Uh humm. (agreement)

When I interviewed Kathy’s mom, she answered, “Kathy loves showing her art to my husband and me. We praise her efforts and ask her general questions about her work, for example, ‘Can you tell me a little about it?’” (Interview with Kathy’s mother, Feb 22, 2008).

7.3.a. Making a Present

Me: Sylvia, what did you make?

Sylvia: I just wanted to make dots. That’s for mama.

When I asked why she drew this, she explained that she just made dots and she was going to give the picture to her mother (Figure 30). After the art activities, I interviewed Sylvia.

Me: What’s this?

Sylvia: It’s umm . . . two pancakes and two . . . um . . . like on top of each other.

Me: Ok. Why did you use the pen?

Sylvia: Because I wanted to use it.

Me: To decorate?

Sylvia: Yeah.
Me: Do you usually make art at home?
Sylvia: No, not that much.
Me: Not that much, why not?
Sylvia: Because we don’t have stuff to make art at home.
Me: What do you usually draw?
Sylvia: Pancakes.
Me: Pancakes?
Sylvia: Yeah, I can draw pancakes.
Me: After making this, will you show it to your mom and dad?
Sylvia: Yeah.
Me: Why?
Sylvia: Because I want them to see it.

It was rather common to observe that children made their artwork for the purpose of a gift. Once they finished their works, they were eager to show their finished products to others. Further, they were eager to give their works to others.

8. **Drawing from a Larger Social Discourse**

8.1. **Inclusion of Other Voices**

In Bakhtin’s view (Holquist,1990), any utterance is heteroglossic, which means that it includes many voices reflected from historic, cultural, and social sources. I coded utterances as inclusion of other voices when children were strongly reflecting sociocultural values in their representations.

8.1.a. **Gender Issues**

The idea of gender was often represented in children’s choice of subject matter and colors (Figure 31).
Figure 31. Daniel’s Snowman With a Hat, modeling clay.

Me: Wow, is that a hat?
Daniel: Yeah.
Me: Cool~
Edward: It looks like a queen hat.
Daniel: (No response to Edward. He is still working on the hat.)
Edward: Is it a boy or girl?
Daniel: It is a boy.
Me: Why?
Edward: It looks like a girl.
Daniel: Because he has a hat.
Edward: A girl has a hat too.
Me: That’s true.
Daniel: But this one has a big one.

Daniel added a hat on his snowman. I complimented Daniel, but soon Edward offered Daniel a critique: “It looks like a queen hat.” When Daniel did not reply to Edward, he inquired again about the gender of the snowman and commented that the snowman looked like a girl. Daniel contradicted Edward with his reasoning that the snowman was a boy
because he had a hat. Edward countered Daniel’s thinking with the argument, “A girl has a hat too.” Instantly, Daniel provided another reason why he made a boy snowman—because it had a big hat.

In the twin brothers’ conversation, regardless of whether the snowman was a boy or girl, their dialogues reflected their perceptions of gender. Daniel considered that a boy would have a hat and that a boy’s hat would be bigger than a girl’s hat. Here, what we should focus on is who is doing the talking (Wertsch, 1991). Clearly, Daniel gave his explanation of the snowman, but at the same time, another voice could be seen in his dialogue. He was projecting the idea of a difference between big and small for boys and girls, respectively, as well as his perspective on hats that belong to boys.

8.1.b. Citationality

I coded an utterance citationality when children borrowed sources from other cultural discourses. This category included cultural media influences, storybooks, and other cultural sources. Daniel referred to characters from the TV series Dink, the Little Dinosaur (Figure 32).

Daniel: I’m making Amber and the Flapper.

Edward: (pointing to Daniel’s drawing) He’s making a long tail.

Me: Did you make a present for your dad?
Daniel: Yeah . . . today, it’s his birthday.

Me: What did you make for him?

Daniel: I’m making this for him (as he points to part of the drawing). This is the sun.

Me: Why did you draw the sun?

Daniel: Because the dinosaurs do live with a different sun.

In this particular scene, Daniel was talking about *Dink, the Little Dinosaur*.

This episode reflects an incident of citationality from a larger social influence on children’s drawing—TV.

Here is another example of citationality.

*Figure 33. Daniel’s McDonald’s, Pen on the paper.*

Daniel: This is my McDonald’s. (He puts the letter M on his McDonald’s drawing. It’s really surprising how Daniel is noticing the symbols used by the restaurant chain.)

Edward: May I see? (to Daniel)

Me: Is it McDonald’s? (laughing)

Kathy: What did he draw?

Me: McDonald’s. You put an M here, right?

Daniel: Yeah. (with pride)
In this particular drawing, it’s amazing how Daniel captured the capital M icon of McDonald’s in this drawing (Figure 33). In this picture, Daniel displayed several versions of the M symbol for McDonald’s.

8.2. Amalgam of Cultural Texts

Visual arts were used as alternative forms of literacy in this classroom. When the children learned lessons, their teachers asked them to draw what they knew and had learned about the topic from the lesson. Because this classroom was composed of 4 and 5 year olds, only half the children were able to write their names independently.

I observed that the children regarded drawing as an acquired capability.

Daniel: I’m gonna draw an apple tree.
Me: Why are you making an apple tree?
Daniel: . . . Because I like them, and eat them.
Me: That’s a very good idea.
Kathy: I’m thinking . . . to draw a tree . . . an apple tree.
Edward: I want to draw a monkey and rabbit.
Daniel: Look at my apple tree. It’s my apple tree.
Me: You can add chunks of apples . . . too. Right?
Daniel: I’m gonna make a bird.
Me: Why are you adding the bird on it?
Daniel: Because I love birds and I know how to draw a bird.

When the teachers asked the children to draw what they were thankful for, Daniel said he was going to make an apple tree (Figure 10). From his explanation, we learn that Daniel chose the subject of birds based on his preferences and his ability to draw them. Many times, the children reproduced the same images with minor variations. This raises the question of why the children were producing the same images over and over again. When the children produced what they were able to create, it was easier for them to win the approval of others.

Edward: I drew the sun.
Daniel: I drew the moon.

Edward: This is the moon I drew. (pointing to the moon) I can draw the moon.

In this short conversation, Edward highlighted his confidence in his ability to draw the moon. Here is another example of visual arts as cultural tools.

Daniel: Can I write my name in Hebrew? I write my name in Hebrew (as he points at his name). Look what I wrote—my name in Hebrew.
Me: Wow, you know how to write in Hebrew. That’s cool. I don’t know any Hebrew. Daniel, can you make another one?
Edward: I wrote my name with the left hand.

When Daniel showed off his ability to write his name in a different language, Edward immediately reacted to Daniel’s action with the assertion that he could write his name with his left hand.

**Summation**

In using verbal and visual discourse, children embody a sense of the self, others, and the environment. The findings of this study confirm the perspective discussed in previous
works (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) that children’s discourses emerge from the tension between self and others, including the many other voices from society, from cultural values, and through direct communication with others. I underwent several trial-and-error episodes in observing, describing, and interpreting children’s art-making processes (Wolcott, 1994). From the analysis of the whole data set, I recognized the emergence of patterns in how children communicated by using a rich combination of verbal and visual discourses. Because of the large data set, I needed to identify the emergent themes to display the findings distinctly. However, the development of emergent themes does not mean that a limitation existed in the context that was able to break down their occurrence; rather it called attention to what was going on in children’s art making in the situated context.

Numerous studies have attempted to explain children’s artistic development in terms of the forms of visual expression in their drawings. Lowenfeld’s (1987) developmental model argues that children’s artistic development follows a linear and unfolding process from the scribble, the preschematic, the schematic, and the pseudo-naturalistic stages to realism and naturalism. He identified the general features of children’s representational ability at specific ages. Lowenfeld believed that children have their own ability to develop graphic representation. In looking at children’s pictures, Lowenfeld mainly focused on the visual characteristics of children’s drawings.

Other studies have considered the relationship between children’s graphic development and their cognitive development. Golomb (1992) investigated the representations in children’s drawings in relation to symbol formation and cognitive development. Golomb conducted experimental studies with children, in which the children were asked to draw different emotions, and they drew on the use of colors, forms, and positions. Gardner (1980), who conducted important studies on cognitive intelligence, said, “The child is speaking directly through his drawings, that is, each line, shape, and form
conveys the inner feelings as well as explicit themes of the young child” (p. 94). Gardner mainly investigated the child’s proficiency in aesthetics in the cognitive realm. He was attentive to the artistic properties under the categories of emotion in the three aesthetic realms of expression, balance, and the use of line and composition.


Most of the previous studies researching children’s art have focused on the representations in children’s drawings or on variations in the subject matter, the visual expression of forms and shapes, and other cultural influences. However, a distinguishing factor of the current study is that this research looked at what children were doing in terms of the unified process of action and communication and what was happening in the art-making process between and among the children.

The contribution of these coding categories of is that this system can be applied to the analysis of children’s drawing events in other settings. It can also be applied to other social decision-making processes involving the creation of art by young people. Just as Dyson’s (1983, 1986) work can be applied to other settings to understand children’s use of language, the coding categories developed in this study can be applied to understand the broad phenomenon of the communicative aspects of children’s art making in other social settings. These coding categories emerged from long hours of observation and careful investigation, and various media were used to capture dynamic moments in the children’s art making.
The communication that occurred during children’s art-making process had many different uses and purposes. The children used various types of communication in their verbal and visual utterances. In the themes identified in the verbal utterances, the discourse pattern of talk to self was an extension of what had already been recognized as self-talk. However, these results identified how children talked to themselves, for example, by spelling, mumbling, and using self-regulatory talk. Social talk was one of the most prevalent phenomena during children’s art-making process, which confirms existing perspectives on children’s learning as social and contextual. Within the category of social talk, there was a difference between utterances directed to an adult and peer-to-peer utterances. Children directed the talk to an adult mainly for seeking acceptance and verification, whereas peer-to-peer utterances had a more active aspect among their peers, being used to compete, show favor, or contradict each other. Art-related talk, one of the more frequent types of talk, was divided into instructional dialogues, explanatory statements, and positioning remarks. Talk was categorized as personal stories when the children shared their prior experiences or preferences. In this type of talk, the children’s stories related to their everyday lives, which represented their experiences. Bakhtin (1981) theorized that when various discourses meet, there are moments that wrestle before we adopt a discrete perspective, which he termed authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. Bakhtin (1981) explained authoritative discourse as follows:

The authoritative word is . . . so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given in lofty spheres, not those familiar contacts . . . for example, the authority of religious dogma, or of acknowledged scientific truth or of a currently fashionable book. (pp. 342–343)
Bakhtin named this contact zone the place we “struggle against various kinds and degrees of authority” (p. 345). Personal stories can be seen as internally persuasive discourse based on the children’s everyday lives. Different from authoritative discourse, internally persuasive discourse can easily be transformed as we make contact with other sociocultural discourses (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Play talk was often observed during the art-making process. This was traditionally a marginalized area, but when children played with peers, active social practices were taking place among them. According to Freedman and Ball (2004), “In a Bakhtinian sense, with whom, in what ways, and in what contexts we interact will determine what we stand to learn” (p. 6).

In interpreting the children’s utterances, it was possible to see how they progressed in their ways of seeing or, to use Bakhtinian terms, in their ideological becoming. For example, in analyzing the children’s visual utterances, I found inner communication, person-to-person communication, and voices from the larger social discourse in the formation of the children’s own art making. In Bakhtin’s (Holquist, 1990) conceptualization of ideological becoming, he placed emphasis on the self in how the individual develops by interacting with others to make meaning through constant contact with cultural and historical contexts. The categories of person-to-person communication and drawing on the larger social discourse in particular reflect distinctive Bakhtinian views as interconnected voices. These moments of conflicting voices could be great learning moments for children: “Another’s discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth, but strives to determine the very basis of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior” (p. 342).

The category of expression, which belongs to the larger category of inner communication, refers mainly to the visual expressive strategies used by the children. Different from expression, storytelling, within the larger category of inner communication, can be seen as
visual narratives that have various aspects of concretization, mystification, transformation, and succession in the children’s unfolding stories.

In understanding each child’s pictures or utterances, I learned that many latent purposes, influences, practices, and actions were working together in their utterances. Children’s verbal and visual utterances showed that the children greatly appreciated what others thought. They acknowledged and reacted to the views of others in the art they produced. The social values and inseparable self–other relationship were deeply reflected in their art making.

In this section, I have displayed selected distinguishing patterns in children’s utterances during their art-making process. In the next section, I present an in-depth analysis of one child’s art-making process. Even though this study was done with four participants, the next episode focuses only on Daniel’s art making. When data were generated by video camera, I set up the camera angle to capture the participants one by one. The data generated were recordings of both groups and individuals. From my previous research, I had learned that it was valuable to take a close-up view of one participant at a time because there were many distractions at the art table. Thus, I rotated the close-up recordings so they included all the participants in the research. Among the data collected, Daniel’s episode had high-quality video recordings and a large volume of paintings. Previously, I completed a separate analysis that included all the participants and multiple art-making episodes, but here I show Daniel’s one-day drawing event because it was full of interesting stories and interactions at the busy art table.
Chapter 5

ANALYSIS

This section presents the process by which I analyzed what was going on in the pictures. After finishing the general observation, I conducted two or three observations that focused only on one focal child. I repeated this intense observation for each of my focal students. Among the data collected, this section is an analysis of a 1-day art activity that focused on only one participant, Daniel. Video-recording devices were set up to capture Daniel’s art-making process up close. He made seven drawings in 1 day, with intriguingly rich accounts and art.

On this particular day, I set up the art table with Chinese ink and Asian paper, which is very thin and soft. Before the activity began, I shared a sample of calligraphy and explained what calligraphy was. In the Asian tradition, learning how to write letters is a highly valued practice. At the beginning of the art activity time, I gave students a choice either to write their own names on the paper or to draw anything they wanted. During the data collection process, I usually provided the materials and let them draw whatever they wanted. To observe the children’s interactions and communication through art, I tried to act as a guide in managing the art table by avoiding dominating it and allowing the participants to use their free will.

In this section, each drawing is analyzed separately through the processes of examining the visual aspects of the picture, analyzing the contextual information around the art-making process, and synthesizing this information to interpret the drawing. In the first step of analysis, I described what each picture showed in a close-up view of the drawing. In the next step of analysis, I presented both visually and verbally spoken utterances used in the
drawing context. In displaying the transcripts, I numbered the utterances tied to the speaker line by line. In other words, when the speaker spoke many sentences without interruption from others, I grouped the talk as one utterance. To help understand the flow of action and the moment of the process, I extracted video clips displayed in intervals. The length of this selected video clip is 26 min and 7 s. The intervals between clips were selected when the participant showed a distinguishable action or when the participant made progress on a drawing. Last, in looking at the latent meaning of the context, I discussed the communicative aspects of Daniel’s art-making process, how he interacted with others, and how he internalized and externalized spoken discourse in the form of a visual account.

**First Drawing: An Alien**

*Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture*

In this step, I described precisely what was shown in the children’s pictures. The analysis was done with only the information from the finished drawing and the title. Kellman’s (1999) categories were used to analyze the children’s pictures. Kellman conducted serious ethnographic research on an autistic boy who had made an extensive number of drawings. Previous studies have based their criteria for analyzing selections of children’s drawings largely by focusing on the development of intelligence, the types of subject matter drawn, or cultural influences. Before Kellman’s study, it was difficult to find good examples of criteria used to analyze children’s pictures. Thus, I refer to Kellman’s study in looking at the pictures because it investigates a child’s drawing methodically:

Drawing subjects used as criteria in dividing Peter’s images into general categories included: line quality (heavy outlines, light, sketchy, hatchy lines, or hard lines dug into paper); types of forms (active, static, complete or incomplete, solid or insubstantial, rounded or jagged, detailed or plain); use or not of color; type of space
Likewise, Kellman’s set of drawing subjects is referred to in the present investigation of the visual aspects of Daniel’s drawings.

Figure 34. Daniel’s *Alien*, Chinese ink, 2008.

In the picture above (Figure 34), the main subject is located on the right side, from the angle of the viewer. The alien is large enough to be fully filled out end to end. The subject located on the right, from the angle of the viewer, is depicted with heavy outlines. The line quality is impressive, showing powerful structures with an arrangement of details. The viewer can feel a sense of vividness from the types of active forms composing the main subject.

The subject has a face with two eyes. The left eye is smaller than the right eye. Based on information from the drawing, Daniel might have put both eyes on at the same time. In the upper part of the head, three subsidiary lines (two T-type lines and one parallel line) are
shown. One thick line crosses over the center of the face; it is indistinguishable what this line is. An oval shape composed of relatively thick lines is presented in front of the face. The right part of the oval shape is relatively bigger than the left part. As the drawing shows, Daniel might have put more effort into drawing the right part of the oval shape than the left. Alternatively, he might have spent more time on the right side. There are three lines coming from the back of the head, which look like either tentacles or hair. In the part connecting the head to the body, several thick lines meet.

Daniel separated the torso and the legs. In the middle of the bottom, a black mass is shown. Daniel put two lines on the left side of the body, which can be interpreted to be the arms. It is interesting that the right part is composed of a large black cluster, in which details are hard to find. Along with the overall strong brushstrokes, sketchy lines appear sporadically in the upper part of the head, the central lower part of the body, the back part of the head, and the left leg.

Another subject appears in the picture, which is located on the left side of the drawing. In the same way Daniel created the main subject in the picture, he composed the sub-subject of several masses. Clearly, Daniel did not repeat the drawing subjects in this picture when creating the main and sub-subjects, and the main difference is in the size of the subjects. The left figure is divided into two parts. In the upper part, massive brushstrokes are used to make a formless shape. In addition, the traces of the brush are presented at the end of the shape. In the lower part, Daniel added hatched lines to fill out the half-moon shape.

Overall, many lines in this picture are overlapping. Daniel seemed to try to put as many details in his drawing as he could. However, the overlapping brushstrokes hinder interpretation of the image he created.
01 Daniel: I can spell my name. D . . . (He writes D with a turning angle clockwise. He starts using the brush with his left hand.)

Daniel: E . . . (He writes E overlapping his previous D.)

Daniel: A . . . (Daniel draws an A-ish letter by beginning from the left side and drawing it back to the right side. He made the letter in two ways.)
Daniel: I don’t know how to spell my name. (He finishes writing the letter A with a zigzag action.)

[Based on observations across the whole data collection process, he certainly knows how to write his name. In this scene, it seems as though he began by writing his name too big, resulting in a failure to make the letters fit onto the paper.]

Daniel: I . . . I spell it all over again. D-A . . .

Mary: M-A-R-Y. That’s my whole name.

Me: Yeah, you’ve got it. Once you’re done, you need to write your name on it.

Daniel: I don’t know how to write my name. (He ruins his A with his brush.) Can I just color? (to me) (He started to fill out the letters.)

Me: If you don’t want to write your name, you may paint.

[In the meantime, Daniel is filling out the letters with the brush.]
06 Sylvia: Can I color on it?

07 Me: But I don’t have any colors today.

[I was intentionally limiting their palette at that time.]

(Daniel is working on his drawing. During the painting process, he is looking at his pictures at the same time, and he nods his head from left to right a couple of times.)

23 Daniel: Is it a yogurt bowl? (meaning the individual cup for the black paint)

24 Me: Yeah.

25 Mary: Huh?

(Daniel is stirring the paint with his left hand to get more paint on his brush.)

26 Daniel: I’m making an alien. (addressing his subject)
27 Me: Ha ha ha, do you wanna make an alien?

28 Sylvia: Yeah.

29 Me: Do you wanna have another paper? (to Sylvia)

(Once Daniel addresses his subject matter, Sylvia follows him.)

30 Daniel: My- my alien is doing poop.

(He stops drawing his alien for a second and raises his eyes to look at me.)

31 Sylvia: Ha ha ha ha

32 Me: Poop? Why?

(Daniel is smiling and is satisfied with the others’ reactions.)

(He now returns to the picture and puts the right eye on the alien. In addition, he adds a snout to the face of the alien. After that, he puts on the left eye and looks to the right and left of his picture.)

33 Mary: I’m coloring my E.T. (?)

34 Sylvia: Why [are] we, why [are] we just painting?

(Sylvia strongly wants to use various colors in her picture.)

Why didn’t you bring (( )), why did you bring just this color?

35 Me: Well . . . it’s a secret.

36 Sylvia: Please ↑ . . . tell ↑ me ↓.
(Daniel puts antennae on the back of the alien’s head. When making the three antennae, he starts with the bottom one and adds two more antennae above it. He had been checking his picture from a distance while repeating this reaction several times. He then touches the alien’s feet while looking at the picture from different angles.)

37 Daniel: Look at my alien. Look at my alien.
Look at my alien. (He first lifts up the picture and pushes it toward me. Finally, he stands up to show it to me.)

It’s a person and it’s on the back. (He means the Asian paper is too thin and he can see the picture on the back too.)

38 Me: Wow, do you like it?
39 Daniel: It’s cool.
40 Tyson(pseudonym): It looks↑ like a dog↓.
41 Daniel: It’s a poop.
42 Tyson: It looks like a dog.
43 Daniel: It’s an alien.
44 Mary: Yeah. Do you like mine? I’m almost done.

(Daniel gets a new blank piece of paper from me and begins drawing the second drawing. He draws an open oval shape from right to left with his left hand. Again, he overlaps this with another brushstroke, pausing briefly to look at the form, and closes the oval.)

Understanding the Picture True to the Picture

Throughout the entire data collection period, participants were given a free choice of subject matter. I provided new materials—Chinese ink and Asian paper. Daniel was interested in the transparent nature of the paper, but he struggled to use the brush. In his action of writing the letters twice, he could not write his name as he wished (line 01). As a
result, he remarked, “I don’t know how to spell my name.” Based on my observations across the whole data collection process, he certainly knew how to write his name. In this scene, he seems to have begun by writing his name too big, resulting in a failure to make the letters fit onto the paper. He began to write his name again on the left side of the paper and made it smaller than his first attempt. However, he was not satisfied with the way he wrote the new material, and again said, “I don’t know how to write my name. Can I just color?” (line 04: verification). In this moment, Daniel sought confirming instructions and permission from me.

It is interesting that he changed the letters he was dissatisfied with into the subject of his drawing. One intriguing fact from the above scene is that Daniel was considering the aesthetic value very strongly. While painting, he looked at the picture several times from various angles. As he unconsciously repeated an action, he developed more detail in the picture. When Daniel drew a mystifying/fantasy subject, an alien (line 26), Sylvia announced that she would make one too (line 28: copying and exchanging subjects with peers). With his satisfaction in awakening others’ interest in his subject, he developed even more details in his character, “My- my alien is doing poop” (line 30: concretization). When Sylvia laughed at his remark, he smiled and was satisfied with it. Like Sylvia, Mary drew the same subject as her peers and even called her subject an E.T. (line 33). Thus, we can observe the reciprocal process of circulating the subject in this episode.

Once Daniel had finished his first drawing, he repeated, “Look at my alien” three times, to check my response (line 37: seeking recognition from adults). He first lifted the picture up and pushed it toward me. Finally, he stood up to show it to me. From this action, we can infer that he was eager to get my response (what I thought of his picture) at that moment. He also explained that his alien was a person type (line 37), and he showed an interest in the nature of the transparent Asian paper (sharing discoveries).
Second Drawing: A Walking Alien in the Nightmare Garden

Figure 35. Daniel’s Walking Alien in the Nightmare Garden, Chinese ink.

Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture

Compared with the first drawing, this drawing was comparatively simple because only one subject is presented in the picture. The character is located in the center of the paper and to the right side. From the top right corner to the center, the letters cross over the subject matter. On the whole, heavy outlines compose the subject, except for the left side of the face. The form and structure of the subject look active, and Daniel seems to prefer creating round shapes rather than jagged types. From this point of view, the image Daniel created looks powerful, but at the same time, the image looks familiar. Based on the small splatters on the paper, we can assume that he held the brush tightly throughout the art-making process.

The face looks like a raindrop shape. There is only one eye on the face. The two antennae on the top of the head provide a hint of what the subject is. In the center of the face, he put an L pattern, but it is hard to differentiate the details in the center of the face from the outline of the face. The details and the outline are clustered together in a large black square on the right side of the face. A number of vertical brushstrokes appear on the left side of the face, which could be interpreted as either the mouth or the ear.
Twisted lines connect the head and the half-moon-shaped body. In this picture, the outlines mainly compose the subject matter, but the four legs on the bottom are presented as thick traces of the brush.

**Drawing Context: Interpreting the Image Through the Use of Discourse Analysis**

(Daniel gets a new blank paper from me and begins drawing the second drawing. He draws an open oval shape from right to left with his left hand. Again, he overlaps this with another brushstroke, pausing briefly to look at the form, and closes the oval.)

(He puts a dot in the center of the oval several times.)

(He adds a line at the end of the subject.)
(Then he puts his brush in the cup to get more paint. He stirs the brush counterclockwise over and over again.)

(He draws back over the line he drew in the upper part of the subject and adds a dichotomous shape counterclockwise as the lower part of the subject.)

(He puts the brush into the cup and stirs clockwise many times. He lifts the brush up in the air and then puts it into the cup again. In addition, he makes a left leg and a right leg one after the other.)
(He stirs the brush again vigorously and checks the brush in the air. He makes a tail and antennae from the right to the left in turns.)

45 Me: What’s that, Daniel?

46 Daniel: An alien is walking.

(He puts the left antenna on several times to make big antennae and puts a black shape on the left side of the face.)

47 Me: Walking where?

48 Daniel: Auh-um, nightmare garden. (?)

49 Me: A nightmare garden! (laughing) I like that.

(Daniel puts some black paint on the right side of the face.)

Me: Do you want to have more paint? (putting more ink into his cup)
50 Daniel: Can you see it in the back? (showing it to Mary)

51 Mary: We can see it in the back too.

(This was the second time that Daniel had addressed the character of the paper this day. He was curious about the paper.)

(Daniel puts the paper back on the table.)

52 Daniel: I need more paper.

53 Me: Daniel, write your name first, and then I’m gonna give you a new paper.

(Daniel puts the brush in the bowl and starts writing the first letter, D, in the upper right corner of the paper. His brushstroke begins from the bottom and makes a half circle counterclockwise. He puts another letter next to the D.)

54 Me: Is it Hebrew?
(Daniel had shown me his name written in Hebrew a couple of times earlier.)

55 Daniel: D-A-E-

(Daniel puts the letter E overlapping the subject.)

Daniel: D-A-N- (putting the brush into the cup). I-E. (His letters overlap the drawing.)

(He finishes the second drawing and gets a new piece of paper).

**Understanding the Picture True to the Picture**

When Daniel began the second drawing, he repeated the same action to create a dot. It is intriguing to observe how he reproduced the same image several times. When he drew a line or a dot, he drew it over and over again. These are hidden tracks in his drawing process, the aspects of his drawing we cannot understand by using only the visual elements. When I inquired about the drawing, he explained that he was drawing a walking alien (line 46: mystifying/fantasy). In the same way he created a human-type alien in his first drawing, he characterized the action of the subject in detail when making the second drawing. The antennae and tail could be interpreted as symbols representative of aliens. In his first human-type alien, Daniel did not draw a tail. He added even more information about where the alien was walking—in the nightmare garden (lines 47-48: concretization). Again, he showed his picture to Mary, just as he had shared his finding regarding the nature of the Asian paper. I
interpreted this moment as sharing knowledge. This is the second time Daniel had addressed
the character of the paper that day (sharing discoveries).

**Third Drawing: Germs**

![Image of Third Drawing: Germs]

Figure 36. Daniel’s Germs, Chinese ink.

*Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture*

This drawing is composed only of dots. There is a trace of folding in the center, but it
seems to have been made unintentionally, based on the appearance of the track. The dots
were spread in an irregular manner, with a variety of sizes, control of the brush, and use of
form. Daniel looks as if he is experimenting with the arrangement of the picture and the
material. Several splatters can be observed on the right side of the paper, and we can infer
that he made these tiny dots either by holding the brush tightly or by holding the brush long
enough to drip paint onto the paper. One possible guess as to the subject matter would be that
he was creating the universe, but this would not be a correct guess. The direction of the brush
stokes is variable. The type of space in the whole picture is presented as overlapping and
repeating a similar active form. This drawing looks like a good example of abstract painting
made by a child.

*Drawing Context: Interpreting the Image Through the Use of Discourse Analysis*

(He finishes the second drawing and gets a new paper.)

56 Sylvia: I wanna get a new one.
57 Daniel: Now I’m gonna make a germ.

58 Me: A germ?

59 Daniel: Yeah, a germ. (stirring the paint with his brush)

60 Mary: Can I get a new paper? I wanna have a big paper.

(Daniel puts a big dot on the paper and looks at it for a second. He draws a small dot right next to the first dot.)

Mary: Hey, look! I got a big paper.

(Daniel works silently to make a series of dots. He produces several small dots from right to left.)

61 Sylvia: Hey, you. I got a skinny one. (meaning her narrow paper)

62 Mary: Ha ha ha. I got the fat one.
63 Sylvia: You got the fat one.
64 Me: Oh . . . you got the big one. That’s not a fat one.
65 Daniel: (interrupting the conversation between the other two participants and me) These are only dots.

66 Me: Is that what you are gonna draw, a germ? Right?
68 Me: What kind of germ are you making?
69 Daniel: These are dots . . . that- that makes (you) sne-e-ze.
70 Sylvia: Did you bring more colors?
71 Me: Not today.

(In the meantime, Daniel lifts up the paper and then puts it back down on the table.)
72 Daniel: We saw a movie about it.
73 Me: I’ll bring it in next time. (to Sylvia)
(Daniel stirs his brush several times in the cup. He looks at the brush in the air and touches the wet dots painted on the paper.)

74 Sylvia: You remember my volcano?

75 Me: Oh . . . you wanna make a colorful volcano.

(Daniel plays in the black ink with his hands and makes marks in the lower right part of the paper.)

76 Mary: Can I get a new paper?

77 Me: Yeah.

78 Mary: I wanna draw ↑ an alien ↓. I wanna make it popped. It’s gonna be my Tater. Because my daddy has a dog named Tank. Why do I have black paint on it? (complaining about the dirt on the paper)
Daniel: And the other side. (He turns it over to the other side, fascinated with the calligraphy paper.)

80 Me: Oh, yeah?

81 Daniel: These are just dots. (putting the paper back down on the table)

82 Mary: Is that a bunny face? (meaning her bunny in the picture; she is checking whether her bunny looks like a bunny)

83 Me: Yeah, it’s a bunny face.

84 Daniel: Can I have another paper? (handing the picture to me)

Understanding the Picture True to the Picture

As soon as Daniel got a new piece of paper, he addressed his theme: “Now, I’m gonna make a germ” (line 57). This remark can be categorized as art-related talk, particularly an explanatory statement. His selection of the subject matter involved dialogic aspects based on the influence of his dad, who is a scientist. When he chose the subject, the accumulation of his past experience was functioning at this moment. On observing Daniel’s new piece of paper, Sylvia and Mary wanted to have a new piece of paper as well (lines 56, 60). It is not
surprising that they asked for the same material at the same time. Even though they asked me to distribute the new paper, the latent meaning of this action could be interpreted as competing with each other, belonging to social talk. Further, this phenomenon could be inferred as checking Mary’s remarks: “Can I get a new paper? I wanna have a big paper” (line 60). She boasted about her big, new paper to others: “Hey, look! I got a big paper” (line 60). Sylvia’s reaction to Mary is interesting: “Hey, you. I got a skinny one” (line 61). Mary liked Sylvia’s reaction to her, responding, “Ha ha ha ha. I got the fat one” (line 62). This is a moment of play talk between Mary and Sylvia. They are sharing the fun of comparing the size of the paper (sharing fun).

My response to the children sometimes overlapped their speech during the art-making process because there was a great deal of activity going on at the same time. When I responded to one child, another student quickly inquired and requested my attention. While I was responding to Sylvia and Mary, Daniel interrupted the conversation between the other two participants and me, and kept talking about the germ: “These are only dots” (line 65: explanation of works). When I checked whether he was drawing a germ, Daniel answered that he was making a germ and added more details about it: “These are dots . . . that makes (you) sne-e-e-e” (line 69). He further shared his personal story in relation to the germ: “We saw a movie about it” (line 72: prior experience).

Influenced by Daniel’s series of alien drawings, Mary announced that she was going to draw an alien (explanation of works, addressivity: copying and exchanging subjects with peers). She said her thoughts aloud: “I wanna draw an alien. I wanna make it popped. It’s gonna be my Tater. Because my daddy has a dog named Tank” (line 78). Her remarks were produced from her natural desire to share her thoughts, because I did not ask her to explain her idea about the picture. However, she quickly expanded her idea from an alien to a bunny: “I’m gonna make a bunny.” In this moment, it is interesting see the flow of her thoughts in
terms of fluidity. It seemed that the steps in her thinking underwent several processes quickly. While I was in conversation with Mary, Daniel announced that he had finished the drawing by raising the picture up higher: “Look at my germ!” (line 79: seeking recognition), and he also shared the other side of the paper with others (sharing discoveries).

Fourth Drawing: Doggy Brown Alien

![Figure 37. Daniel’s Doggy Brown Alien, Chinese ink.](image)

**Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture**

By analogy, the face of the subject matter appears to be a human. The face is represented with eyes, a nose, and a mouth. Because the size of the face is small, the details could barely fit on the face. Mainly heavy outlines are present in the picture, but the set of features is depicted as relatively small. Thus, it is obvious that Daniel spent time concretizing the representation of the face in detail.

Regarding the matter of form, the subject looks as if it was drawn in an instant. The use of clear lines might be interpreted as showing the painter’s mastery of the technique of using the brush. It gives a vigorous impression of a moving character. The subject’s pose looks like its left arm is rising up and, at the same time, its right arm is moving downward.
Both hands are presented with several curvy lines at the end of each arm. It is difficult to differentiate each detail because of the use of thick outlines throughout the picture. It is interesting that Daniel allotted a greater portion of the figure to the upper part of the body; the bottom of the body, including the legs, is much smaller. The legs are depicted as only single lines.

**Drawing Context: Interpreting the Image Through the Use of Discourse Analysis**

84 Daniel: Can I have another paper? (handing the picture to me)

85 Me: Yeah.

86 Sylvia: I just started [it] all again, cause I was all ruining it.

(Daniel sets up the new paper on the table.)

87 Edward: Can I draw too?

88 Me: Uh-huh. (agreement)

89 Daniel: Edward, sit right here!

(Daniel taps the position next to him for Edward, and Edward runs to have a seat next to Daniel. Daniel grabs the next chair for Edward. When Edward has a seat next to Daniel, Daniel says, “Lucky!”)

Daniel: Are you gonna write your name, or you can draw, Edward. (He stirs his brush in the cup and then makes the human-type drawing on the paper.)
90 Edward: May I draw?

91 Me: You can draw~ Edward, it’s an Asian paper, and it’s Asian color.

92 Edward: Is that ink? (looking up from the black ink in his individual cup)

93 Me: Yeah, it’s ink. It’s Chinese ink, and Edward, I think you should watch your sleeves before painting. Roll up your sleeves. (Edward rolls up his sleeves by himself.)

94 Daniel: What ink do you mean?

95 Me: It’s a Chinese ink.

96 Daniel: Edward, what we draw on them is . . . (lifting the picture up higher) around snow.

(?)

97 Mary: That’s a puppy dog. That’s a puppy doggy.

98 Daniel: Edward, look! (swinging the picture in front of Edward)

99 Mary: That’s a puppy doggy.

100 Edward: (no response to Daniel)

101 Me: What’s that?

102 Daniel: This is . . . this is . . . (leaning forward to direct Edward’s attention to his picture) turn around so you can see it.

103 Mary: Sylvia, it’s my puppy doll!

104 Daniel: Can I have more paper? (handing the picture to me)
105 Me: What’s that?

106 Daniel: A . . . an alien?

107 Sylvia: That’s a cute dog.

108 Me: What kind of alien?

109 Daniel: A doggy brown alien. (He is holding the picture up still higher.)

110 Me: A doggy brown alien!

111 Daniel: Yeah. (not enthusiastically)

(Daniel seems to be influenced by Mary’s words. Mary repeatedly addresses her subject matter as a puppy doll.)

112 Sylvia: Can I have more paint, please?

113 Me: I think you have enough paint.

114 Sylvia: No, I don’t.

115 Me: Oh, let’s see.

116 Daniel: I don’t. (claiming that he needs more paint)

(I provided each child with extra ink.)

117 Mary: I wanna make the whole thing for my dog.
Understanding the Picture True to the Picture

When Edward approached the art table, Daniel suggested that Edward sit right next to him. Kindly, Daniel let Edward know the instructions of the day: “Are you gonna write your name, or you can draw, Edward” (line 89). Edward chose to draw with the given material and focused on his art making. In the meantime, Daniel tried to direct Edward’s attention to his picture, sharing the information about the paper (sharing discoveries). Mary interrupted Daniel’s talk with a comment to explain her own picture, “That’s a puppy doggy” (line 99: explanation of works). When I inquired about the drawing, Daniel did not answer me but explained the character of the paper to Edward: “This is . . . this is . . . (leaning forward to direct Edward’s attention to his picture) turn around so you can see it.” Mary also chimed in to tell Sylvia about her picture: “Sylvia, it’s my puppy doll!” (line 103). Because Daniel did not get Edward’s attention as he had wanted, Daniel soon asked to have a new piece of paper. When I asked Daniel what he was drawing the second time, he explained his picture without passion, “A . . . an alien? (line 106). At the same time, Sylvia praised Mary’s drawing, “That’s a cute dog” (line 107: compliment). As soon as Daniel heard Sylvia’s comment, he claimed his picture was a puppy brown alien (line 109). It seemed as if Daniel was being told what he had done sometimes and he seemed reluctant to go along with it. In that moment, Daniel definitely seemed to be influenced by Mary’s words, when Mary repeatedly said her subject matter was a puppy dog/doll. Because of Daniel’s failure to get Edward’s attention, he seemed to borrow the idea of the dog in his drawing (copying and exchanging subjects with peers). The interesting part of his drawing was that the subject looked like it did not fit his explanation of the drawing. The drawing looked more like a human than a puppy dog alien. Daniel might have caught on that Sylvia liked Mary’s puppy dog drawing, so he took Mary’s theme and expanded the character, adding the detail of color, a brown puppy alien. It is interesting to see how he shared the idea of the drawing with others, but once he did not get
any response from the others, he took another idea that was praised by his peers. However, he created his own version by adding the twist of the color in his picture (transformation).

**Fifth Drawing: A Rabbit Alien**

![Figure 38. Daniel’s Rabbit Alien, Chinese ink.](image)

*Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture*

This subject is drawn in parallel. It fits onto the paper in full, with thick outlines. The subject looks like an animal or insect, just because the legs are attached to the bottom of the body. The combination of a small number of sketchy lines and the direction of the legs gives the impression that the subject is moving. On the upper part of the head, the sign $\cap\cap$ appears to be either ears or antennae. The long, horizontal body shape resembles a dinosaur. The number of legs could be seven, but the lines are not clearly depicted. Without the $\cap\cap$ symbol, the subject matter could be interpreted as a fish because the type of form displayed is an oval shape with a larger width than height. A large black square is located in the middle of the subject. Overall, it is difficult to recognize particular elements in the content of this drawing; however, Daniel seemed to deliver the substantial theme of the picture with strong lines.
Drawing Context: Interpreting the Image Through the Use of Discourse Analysis

(Daniel begins his fifth drawing. He unfolds the white paper on the table and stretches out the paper with his right hand from right to left. He draws a horizontal line, looks it at, and brushes over the line again. His paper rolls up.)
(Daniel tries to brush over it again and again, and makes an oval shape. His paper rolls up again.)

118 Sylvia: I just need to fill this out.
119 Mary: I gotta make it in color, but . . .
120 Tyson: A birth rabbit thing. (?)
121 Mary: I got a birth rabbit.

(The art table is silent for a little while. Daniel looks at Mary on the opposite side of the table.)

122 Mary: I’m gonna make Max and Ruby.
(Daniel has his head down to put the brush in the cup.)
123 Edward: He is done with ears, though.
124 Mary: Yeah.
125 Edward: It looks like eyes.
126 Mary: These are eyes.
127 Edward: That looks like eyes.
128 Mary: Yes, it is eyes . . . and then I’m gonna make him whiskers.
(Daniel looks at Mary’s picture once and then focuses on his painting again.)
129 Edward: Daniel, does it look like a bunny rabbit? (seeking his opinion)

(Daniel looks at Mary’s picture again.)

130 Daniel: No.

131 Edward: And there’s eyes and ears.

132 Mary: Is it a bunny rabbit? Because he tries to look.

(Daniel stares at Mary with a tilt of his head, and he scratches his hip.)

133 Edward: I’m giving it eyes and ears.

134 Daniel: I’m making an alien like a rabbit.

(Daniel holds the picture up higher and shows it to Edward.)

135 Daniel: Hey, Edward, look!
Daniel: You can draw here (as he turns over the paper) and here (flipping over the paper).
(Daniel wants to let Edward know that the paper is thin enough to see through.)

136 Mary: I’m gonna put fur all over this.

137 Daniel: Can I have another paper? (handing his paper down to me)
(From this scene, I changed the video camera angle. Up to this point, I had focused on recording only Daniel’s art-making process. However, from this point on, Daniel and Edward were present together.)

138 Me: What did you draw here?

139 Daniel: A rabbit alien.
(After I moved his picture onto another table to dry it, Daniel played with his brush in the cup.)

Understanding the Picture True to the Picture

There were active discussions about Mary’s bunny drawing at the art table (commentary). In Mary’s explanation of her work, other voices were included (citationality): “I’m gonna make Max and Ruby” (line 122). Max and Ruby are characters in an animation series from the famous children’s books by Rosemary Wells. Edward commented on Mary’s bunny drawings, pointing out details in her picture (lines 125, 127) and further asked Daniel’s opinion about Mary’s subject. Daniel seemed to be struggling with the rolling paper. While talking with Edward, Mary made progress in concretizing the details in the picture, saying, “. . . Yes, it is eyes . . . and then I’m gonna make him whiskers (line 128: concretization). In that moment, Daniel glanced at Mary’s picture. While debating whether Mary’s bunny looked like a bunny rabbit, Daniel suddenly called attention to his drawing: “I’m making an alien like a rabbit” (line 134: transformation, succession). It belonged to the succession of subject matter in the series of aliens, and he wanted to get recognition from Edward: “Hey, Edward, look!” (line 135). This is a good example of peer-to-peer communication in the category of addressivity, which is the state of reciprocal process as give-and-take in the idea of the drawing. Daniel again shared his finding regarding the material with Edward: “You can draw here (as he turns over the paper) and here (flipping over the paper)” (line 135).

After the conversation about Mary’s rabbit drawing, Daniel named his fifth drawing a Rabbit Alien. He seemed to be influenced by the conversation between Edward and Mary about Mary’s drawing.

Daniel quickly created the drawing as soon as he decided to draw a rabbit alien. Without acquiring information from the title, the drawing would be difficult to interpret. The image of the subject seems strong, but it is challenging to read the details inside. Because the
body is composed largely of streamlined brushstrokes in the outlines, it opens up the possibility of being interpreted in many ways. However, with the symbol of the ears, he created marks distinguishing the subject as a rabbit.

Daniel’s fifth drawing shows signs of being strongly influenced by others. Daniel chose the subject matter and details of the drawing after hearing the discussion between Mary and Edward. However, it is noteworthy that Daniel called the drawing a *Rabbit Alien* instead of a rabbit. On this day, he had made a series of aliens. While staying with the alien theme, he created a variation on the alien subject. In this scene, he created a rabbit alien inspired by the conversation between Mary and Edward. Even though he borrowed the idea from Mary, he continued with his alien theme. He kept trying to direct others’ attention to his picture by interrupting their conversation. When Daniel’s peers did not respond to him, he quickly moved on to the next drawing.

**Sixth Drawing: Microscope**

*Figure 39. Daniel’s Microscope, Chinese ink.*

**Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture**

This drawing is different from the previous drawings in its use of space. In addition, many objects are depicted in the picture. In Daniel’s previous drawings, he had used one strong subject, but this picture is composed of various objects. On the left side of the paper, two large black circles and two medium-sized circles are depicted in the corner. Next to the
circles, the sign of a crescent is intersected by a short vertical line. In the center of the crescent shape, a [ ] is presented aslant, which is attached to the face. The subject is presented obliquely because of the lack of details. In the upper right corner is a group of seven small dots. The drawing also appears to be a collection of his past experiences, which have dialogic aspects in combination with past, present, and future discourses.

**Drawing Context: Interpreting the Image Through the Use of Discourse Analysis**

140 Edward: E-D-W-A-R-D. That’s supposed to be my name. 

(I came close to Daniel to give him a new piece of paper. Edward looked at me and asked for a new piece of paper.)

141 Edward: May I have another paper?

142 Me: What did you draw, Edward?
143 Edward: Eyeballs? (?) Eyeballs. (?)

(I give Daniel a new piece of paper.)

144 Daniel: I’m making a teeny tiny germ (as he starts a new drawing).

145 Edward: This is eyeballs. (?) Black eyeballs.

146 Mary: He made eyeballs!

(Edward leans toward the table to see what Mary is drawing.)

147 Daniel: It looks bigger if you see it through a microscope.

Daniel: I’m doing a microscope. (He puts a diagonal line in the lower right part of the paper and looks at it this way and that way.)

148 Me: Microscope?

149 Daniel: Yeah . . . so we can see a . . . germ. (While drawing with his left hand, he
gesticulates with his right arm. Once he has drawn the lower part, he moves to draw in the upper part of the paper. He puts his brush in the cup.)

I was looking at the microscope. (in a quiet voice)

(Daniel makes bold brushstrokes in the upper part.)

150 Me: Is that a black rabbit? (to Mary)

151 Mary: It’s a black↑ bunny rabbit↓.

152 Me: It’s a black bunny rabbit. What’s the difference?

153 Mary: Huh?

154 Me: What’s the difference?

155 Mary: Oh, he’s all black . . . ((unclear words))

156 Daniel: Now, there is a thunder.
157 Mary: Hey, his name is bunny rabbit. His name is Stomper. Ha ha (laughing) Stomper-duffer.

158 Daniel: May I have another paper?

159 Me: Can you write your name on it? (Daniel writes his name in the lower center part.)

160 Me: What’s that? Sylvia? (noise)

161 Sylvia: We don’t have a picture frame out in our house.

(Daniel scatters the letters of his name around in the picture.)

162 Me: What are you making, Edward?

163 Edward: (pausing, thinking) You will see. (Edward works on his picture while tipping his head sideways.)
(At the same time, Daniel also tilts his head sideways to see his picture. The twins make the same action at the same moment. Based on my observation, they have similar habits when making art.)

164 Me: Sylvia, I’m out of paint.

165 Mary: You can have my paint . . . put it in my cup. (Sylvia and Mary are giving and taking the ink from each other.)

(On this day, Sylvia makes the paper all black and plays with the ink. She keeps asking for more ink.)

166 Edward: This is a man. (He looks up at me.) This is a man. May I have one more paper?

167 Me: Yeah (about to give the paper to him), but write your name on it. (pointing at the right upper corner)
168 Daniel: I got my name on it but that’s long. (He lifts up the paper.)

(Edward is writing his name on the paper.)

*Understanding the Picture True to the Picture*

Daniel returned to his previous theme, germs, but this time he specified the germ as “a teeny tiny germ” (line 144). Daniel added more information about the subject: “It looks bigger if you see it through a microscope” (line 147). Daniel shared his knowledge about microscopes based on his previous experience. He emphasized the subject again: “I’m doing a microscope” (line 147). While explaining the subject, he provided more details to persuade others or help them make sense of the theme. He also revisited the theme of germs when he drew the microscope, “Yeah . . . so we can see a . . . germ. I was looking at the microscope” (line 149). Here, Daniel is modifying his ideas in response to other children. He was eager to share his own discoveries by informing others. Meanwhile, Daniel revisited his prior experiences to provide more concrete details.

Daniel made a circular outline and created a crescent shape as the image of the microscope. Inside the microscope, he put a germ in the form of a dot. Suddenly, Daniel added the thunder close to the image of the microscope (line 156). In the meantime, Mary was having fun naming the subject in her drawing, “Hey, his name is bunny rabbit. His name
is Stomper. Ha ha (laughing) Stomper-duffer” (line 157: play talk, sharing fun, storytelling). It is intriguing that as soon as Daniel heard Mary say this, he created the image of a rabbit right next to the microscope. On the left side of the microscope, Daniel wrote his name: “I got my name on it but that’s long” (line 168).

In this picture, Daniel began by drawing germs and a microscope. His original intention seemed to be to keep to these two images, and he shared his knowledge and prior experiences regarding the instrument of the microscope. This is because his father is a scientist, and Daniel sometimes shares scientific knowledge taught to him by his father. In the interview with his mother, she commented that Daniel and Edward, who are twin brothers, have a positive art-learning environment. Their mother is a designer and their father is good at drawing. His father’s drawings were hung on the wall. One day, Edward and Daniel brought their father’s series of robot drawings, and the teachers wanted to display them on the wall. These particular themes of germs and a microscope definitely looked like indications of scientific knowledge Daniel’s father had shared and Daniel’s prior experiences. Daniel made the further addition of thunder to the picture.

He seemed to finish the drawing by saying, “May I have another paper?” (line 158). But when he heard Mary talking about her bunny rabbit, immediately he supplemented his picture with an image of a bunny rabbit and then signed his name.

**Seventh Drawing, A Ghost**

*Figure 40. Daniel’s Ghost, Chinese ink.*
Analysis of Visual Aspects of the Picture: Literally Looking at the Picture

In this picture, Daniel favored drawing a zigzag line. He looked as if he wanted to write letters horizontally in the picture; however, these are not made clearly in the lower center part of the picture. The main subject is drawn with two eyes and a mouth. It is interesting that it looks like a two-headed figure. Compared with the main subject on the left, the right part of the subject matter appears to be relatively small. Daniel also extended the subject to a third party on the right, but he did not include any details. This drawing looks like a combination of letters and drawing. The viewer may interpret this image as picture writing because of the union of the letters and the image.

Drawing Context: Interpreting the Image Through the Use of Discourse Analysis

169 Me: Daniel, over here. (Daniel quickly grabs the new piece of paper and unfolds it.)

(Meanwhile, Edward is tilting his head sideways while writing his name.)

(To solve the rolling paper problem, Daniel puts a yogurt cup on each corner.)

Me: I'm gonna do this side. (Turning the paper over to get a better result.)
Me: Edward, do you need another paper?

(Daniel is making a zigzag line from the center to the right side of the paper.)

170 Daniel: I’m making a ghost! (He puts more ink on the brush.) I’m making a ghost!

171 Me: A ghost? Is that a snake?

172 Daniel: No, it’s a ghost.

173 Mary: (standing up) I gotta pee pee.

174 Me: Yup, ok.

175 Sylvia: Can I go? I’m done.

176 Edward: I write my name! E-D-W-A-R-D.
177 Me: Yeah, cool~

178 Edward: Can I have another paper? And I wanna have more ink. (I gave another cup of ink to Edward.)

(Edward glances at Daniel’s picture.)

(The twins work silently, tilting their heads this way and that.)

D-A-N- (Daniel is pointing at each of the letters in turn.)


(In the meantime, Edward is focusing on drawing. After making the three dots, he adds a long tail on it.)
Daniel: Look at what is my name. (showing the picture to me)

180 Me: Is that all?

181 Daniel: Yeah. I’m done. Why do you bring arts always?

182 Me: Because I’m an art teacher.

(Edward still tips his head several times. After making the left part, he draws a curve on the right side.)

(Edward checks Daniel’s cup and carefully puts the leftover ink into his cup. He checks where I am and then grabs the other ink previously owned by Mary and puts it together with his. He tilts his head to the left.)
(At the same time, Daniel is showing me the belongings in his cabinet. He also mentions the doll his grandmother gave him. Edward repeats the action of putting the brush in the cup and then painting.)

183 Me: (coming back to the art table) What are you drawing?

184 Edward: You will see. (Edward flips over the picture and taps it.)

185 Daniel: Can I see the camera?

186 Me: Yeah. (moving the camera to focus on him)

187 Daniel: I . . . I know how to make art. That’s fun to make.

(Daniel disappears from the camera.)
Understanding the Picture True to the Picture

Daniel first drew an unseemly zigzag line and then claimed, “I’m making a ghost!” (line 170). After making the ghost, he wrote his name on the right side of the paper. In this particular picture, he quickly created an image of a ghost, wrote his name, and left the art table. Daniel was interested in the video camera I had brought and wondered why I brought materials whenever I visited the classroom. In the ending scene, he expressed his opinion about art: “I . . . I know how to make art. That’s fun to make” (line 187). He seemed to have a great deal of confidence in making art, based on this remark and my general observations during the data collection process. Sometimes, “how to make art” is one of the most valuable abilities learned in the preschool classroom. Further, he commented that he enjoyed making art: “That’s fun to make” (line 187).

In this drawing, Daniel did not explain the action, context, or character of the drawing in detail, but rather claimed the subject was a ghost. Compared with his previous alien drawings, this last picture might be easier to interpret because there was only the single theme of the ghost, although the letters hindered and overwhelmed the subject.

Summary of the Chapter

A picture is challenging to understand if we look only at the finished product. Considering that children’s creation of art is a visual utterance, this study takes a close-up view of the context where the utterances happen. In this chapter, I explore the visual image itself, the context, and my analysis of the picture based on this information. In particular, it is interesting to see what is shown and what is not shown in the picture when we look only at visual images. Borrowing the method of analysis used in Kellman’s (1999) study, I investigated the visual aspects of the drawing. However, all the information and intentions delivered by the child are limited in helping the researcher understand the drawing if the context, action, and accompanying dialogue are not considered.
On this day, Daniel made seven drawings, all of which were created while he actively negotiated the social context of the art-making process. Daniel made a series of aliens, some germs, and a ghost. In the first drawing, an alien, Daniel transformed his unsatisfactory writing into an alien, which was a human-type alien. At the same time, Daniel described the human-type alien as doing poo-poo. When his peers reacted positively, he unfolded the theme of aliens with a number of variations. In the second drawing, he created a walking alien in a nightmare garden. When he made a certain form, he repeated the brushstroke several times. In addition, Daniel sometimes pondered his picture for a while, and he seemed to be negotiating the aesthetic quality when creating art. In the third drawing, he depicted germs and expressed his prior experiences with the topic and knowledge about it. Daniel commented on the nature of the calligraphy paper several times. Indeed, he commented on the nature of the paper each time he finished a drawing. In the fourth picture, of a doggy brown alien, Daniel appeared to have been inspired by a dialogue between Mary and Sylvia. When Mary mentioned her subject, a puppy dog, Sylvia had a favorable reaction. Soon after, Daniel called his fourth drawing a Doggy Brown Alien. Again, influenced by Mary, Daniel created a rabbit alien in his fifth drawing. Here, Daniel’s visual art making functioned as a means of mediation, reflecting the world surrounding him. Daniel used cited images and sources from the previous spoken, made, and created utterances from others. However, in his art making, he recreated the story in his own voice. Daniel tried to direct his peers’ attention to his alien drawings, but his peers—even his twin brother Edward—did not show interest in his pictures. He revisited his previous theme, germs, in the sixth drawing and added more objects to the picture. In this drawing, Daniel recalled his prior experience using a microscope to look at germs. In the meantime, there was active discussion about Mary’s bunny rabbit. In the corner of his sixth drawing of germs and a microscope, Daniel quietly
added a rabbit shape to the picture. In his last drawing, a ghost, he created the image of the ghost quickly and left the art table.

It is meaningful to look at how Daniel’s art was made by integrating other factors, and how the children’s art functioned in context. The transcript above provides some evidence of how Daniel’s subject matter was cultivated and influenced by the continuous responses from, interaction with, and appropriations by others. Furthermore, when he cited sources from others, he recreated them to reflect his own understanding of his visual representation. Here, his visual art making functioned as a means of mediation to reflect the world surrounding him and his peers. It is interesting to see how he shaped his visual art making by using his own perspective when he accepted and invited in the voices of others. From this point of view, children’s artistic process has multiple communicative structures for mediation, including personal signs, social signs, imaginative signs, and historic signs.
Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapters, I explored theories of children’s learning and communication that are relevant to their artistic process. Based on the premise that these learning and communicative practices emerge as a result of social and cultural influences, I presented a one-day art activity to observe up close the flow of discourse in children’s art-making process. In this section, I examine the communicative aspects of children’s art making in relation to the previous literature. In this process, I address the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

Discussion of Research Questions

Question 1

The questions, “What are the communicative aspects in the supervised and spontaneous making of visual art?” and “What communicative aspects can be defined in children’s art making?” were deduced from a synthesis of Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) theories and the existing literature on the sociohistorical nature of children’s discourse surrounding cultural practices (Dyson, 1993). In this section, I present findings relevant to the first inquiry that emerged from the data, theories, and reflections in response to the question regarding the communicative aspects of children’s art making. Based on the assumption that children’s creation of art is a communicative practice that functions as a visual utterance, this study investigates the context in which these utterances happened. To answer the research questions regarding the communicative aspects of children’s art making, this section addresses the aspects of discourse that occurred while children were engaging in art making: 1) the visual utterance, 2) multiple ways of communicating through art, 3) the dialogic aspects of children’s art-making process, 4) the space of authoring, and 5) the importance of the self–
other relationship. In answering the first question, regarding the communicative aspects of children’s visual artistic creations, I refer to several emergent themes in both children’s verbal utterances and their communicative practices while they were engaged in making visual art; 23 of these themes emerged altogether.

**Children’s Art Making as a Visual Utterance**

According to Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1988), “Utterances, that is, are constructed between socially related and thus positioned persons. Since utterances organize experience (as the source of the psyche itself), we are strongly affected by the position we are cast into within interactions” (p. 188). The utterance implies a context of responses to dialogues and communication through various forms of language and other cultural tools. I propose that children’s art-making process can be considered the creation of a visual utterance that has been formed according to specific cultural standards and tastes. To clarify the concept of a visual utterance, I refer to the work of Lev Vygotsky, the Reggio Emilia approach, and other scholars on the similarities and differences in their understanding of children’s creation of visual utterances.

Lev Vygotsky is known as one of the most important figures in the study of children’s learning and social development in education and psychology, and Mikhail Bakhtin is famous for his analysis of human communication and his investigation of the construction of the self. Both Vygotsky and Bakhtin emphasized the role of culture and society in human thought and mind, and they regarded the sign system, which developed as cultural symbols, words, dialogues, language, literature, and art, as the crucial means by which awareness and subjectivity grow (Holland et al., 1998). In particular, both Vygotsky and Bakhtin paid attention to the role of discourse. Vygotsky viewed cultural signs as mediators that are acquired through social interaction, and he focused on cognitive development. Bakhtin was also interested in signs, especially in their structure and use in communication through words,
but he focused more on expression and interpretations of the words. As Holland et al. (1998) observed,

Vygotsky gave more emphasis to the semantic, representational potential of mature linguistic practice and its potential for semiotic mediation, and thus gave less attention to what Bakhtin continued to emphasize, the pragmatic aspects of language—how it was used, how it communicated power and authority, how it was inscribed with status and influence. (pp. 177–178).

Vygotsky’s symbolic languages are valuable for identifying visual utterances. Vygotsky observed that children learn language and other forms of symbolic representation through interaction and social practice, and that they make meaning during the process and acquire knowledge through the process of cultural mediation. In the acquisition of symbols, Vygotsky emphasized the meaning-making process as “the interdependence of individual and social processes in the co-construction of knowledge” (Mahn, 1999, p. 347). Vygotsky indicated that cultural tools (e.g., languages, symbols) are particularly important means for mediating our experiences and our world to manage our actions (Holland et al., 1998).

Vygotsky believed that children acquire symbol systems, and culture in particular, in the process of “semiotic mediation” (Mahn, 1999, p. 343), and researchers have recognized the cognitive aspects of art making, which are presented as a complex symbol system (Dyson, 1989).

Both Bakhtin and Vygotsky also investigated the construction of meaning systems through mediation. Vygotsky believed that the core of human existence is making meaning (Mahn, 1999), and he further argued for the need to examine the meaning-making process of children, who build meaning through social interaction. On the other hand, Bakhtin emphasized the importance of context and situation (how and where the meaning is produced) and focused on the challenges of the disabled interpretation of meaning without context.
(Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover, Bakhtin discussed the perpetual circulation of citations in the
dialogue of human beings and analyzed the nature of communication by looking at the
structure and formation of utterances.

Just as Vygotsky saw the cultural environment as a place where children’s
development occurs, Bakhtin emphasized the ideological environment where the individual
makes sense of the world and obtains a way to communicate with others by acquiring cultural
symbols. Thus, both Vygotsky and Bakhtin believed that the cultural and social factors
played a critical role in the formation of personhood. However, Bakhtin was more interested
in individuality in the ideological environment, for example, by looking at the dialogic
relationship between an individual and the social world (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

One distinguishing characteristic in Bakhtin’s view of the utterance is that
characteristics of the act are closely linked to society, in contrast to those of Vygotsky, who
considered languages as semiotic cultural tools (Freedman & Ball, 2004). In Bakhtin’s view,
utterances are presented and interact with other utterances that existed in the past, that
continue to exist in the present, and that will exist in the future (Bakhtin, 1981). Bakhtin
considered languages as being subjective and active cultural tools, and he considered the
process of listening to others and responding to others as important means of acquiring an
understanding of utterances from outer sources and informing others of our inner world.

This inseparable relationship between speaking and listening can be applied to
understanding children’s artistic process. Bakhtin viewed the communication of utterances as
being composed of a speaker, an addressee, and the relationship between the two. This
concept can be extended to the relationship between the artist and the viewer in the creation
of visual utterances. Even though art making undergoes several processes—for example,
choosing the subject matter, the artist interpreting or injecting his or her thoughts and
experiences, and the aesthetic negotiation needed to visualize and externalize the subject—it
is clear that the child recognizes the existence of a viewer. In other words, audiences are important for young children. For example, in Chapter 5, when Daniel initiated the alien drawing (Figure 34), he added his explanation that the alien was pooping (line 30), and he was satisfied with Sylvia’s response of laughter. He then continued to select the alien theme. Because he had checked to see whether his theme was favored by viewers (in this case, his peers around the art table), he was confident about exploring various aliens in a series of drawings. However, when the bunny rabbit was discussed by his peers, he quickly captured the idea of the bunny in creating his later drawings. Daniel’s selection of subject matter seemed to reflect his sensitivity toward what the viewers thought of his drawings.

Figure 34. Daniel’s Alien, Chinese ink, 2008.

I observed numerous times how sensitively children (especially my four focal students) reacted to and were influenced by others’ views, in much the same way that Daniel cared about what others thought of his drawings. In the production of visual utterances, when considering the context of the art-making process, children followed what other people liked and struggled if they received criticism on their art making. Another good example of how
children recognize the existence of viewers occurred when Sylvia changed her art-making strategy from creating visual details to representing abstract themes.

During the data collection process, she initially executed themes configurationally, drawing such things as the people around her, everyday objects, and pets (Figure 14). While the students were making art together, she sometimes asked me for help to show how to draw a lion or a polar bear. The subjects seemed to be different from her usual themes, which were drawn from her first-hand experience and reflected the influence of her peers’ conversations and subject matter. This occurred at approximately the same time that Kathy wanted to teach Sylvia how to draw something. Sylvia seemed uncomfortable whenever Kathy tried to give her a demonstration of her art making. Sylvia began to spend less time at the art table, and she changed her preferred style to abstract paintings (Figure 13). It seemed that Sylvia avoided being compared with other students. Sylvia had figured out her shortcomings in her ability to make visual representations (she was the youngest among the four focal students), and seemed to feel her drawings did not live up to her expectations and those of other people. There were also some moments in the early period of data collection when other children made fun of Sylvia’s drawings. She chose a different method of art making to avoid her
viewers’ criticism of her drawing skill. Sylvia’s struggle implies how sensitive these young children were to the perspectives of their viewers or audiences.

Figure 13. Sylvia’s untitled drawing, acrylic paint.

One of the most significant current discussions in the research on children’s visual languages is regarding the Reggio Emilia approach. The Reggio Emilia approach broadens the ways that children use art in terms of multiple symbolic languages operating together. Malaguzzi (1998) explained, “Our own Vygotsky . . . reminds us how thought and language are operative together to form ideas and to make a plan for action, and then for executing, controlling, describing, and discussing that action” (p. 83). Inspired by Vygotsky, the Reggio Emilia approach also borrowed the idea of the zone of proximal development in their understanding of how children can learn from others. Regarding the discussion of languages, Vecchi (2010) stated, “In Reggio pedagogy, a choice has been made to extend the term languages beyond the verbal and consider language as the different ways used by human beings to express themselves: visual language, mathematical language, scientific language, etc.” (p. 9, italics in original). The focus of this approach is to extend the ways that children represent and communicate their minds in various symbolic systems and languages. Terms of poetic language are introduced as “forms of expression strongly characterized by expressive or aesthetic aspects such as music, song, dance or photography” (p. 9). The Reggio Emilia
approach focuses on how to “make visible” children’s thinking in various ways, which has extended the power of children’s multiple languages from expressing their thoughts and developing connections to constructing knowledge by listening to other children’s voices. Bakhtin’s (1981) works are directed mainly toward languages that humans use, and when he used the term utterance, I believe he intended to incorporate the context and the openness of children’s dialogues. This is unique to Bakhtin’s view of the utterance, which is “becoming” in the middle of the past, present, and future as a reflection of the world. Because the Reggio Emilia approach considers poetic language in the aesthetic realm, children’s visual utterances include the characteristics of narratives and other stories that abound in the art-making event in their process of ideological becoming (i.e., how the self makes sense of the world).

The relationship between poetry and the novel provides a means of understanding the range of children’s creation of visual utterances. It is well known that Bakhtin mainly analyzed the genre of the novel, and he discussed the dialogic aspects, the heteroglossia, and the conflicts and struggle between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse in the novel. He argued that the novel should not be poetic. Children’s visual art was traditionally considered a monologue, with the emphasis on the visual elements or certain limited features. Consequently, researchers were previously concerned only with the expressive languages, even though the creation of visual utterances incorporates multiple layers and languages (experiences, context, practice, voices from culture, etc.) altogether. Thus, the difference between the Reggio Emilia approach and visual utterances used in the current study is the inclusion of many voices, rather than the expression of poetic languages, which places emphasis on children’s aesthetic realm. It is clear that the Reggio Emilia approach values what children say in multiple ways, and it lets children expand their ideas by listening to them via a reactive pedagogy. I assume that the poetic languages have lyrical characteristics because this approach works with metaphor. Thus, visual utterances have
other characteristics in addition to a focus on the aesthetic realm, such as the inclusion of children’s negotiation, their growth, and the relational aspects of their language in both direct and indirect contact with others and with social norms.

Although the Reggio Emilia approach places emphasis on responsive pedagogy, in which children have an active role, the concept of the visual utterance includes more of the relational aspects, the struggles children go through in representing and interpreting images, and the relationship with viewers that children face in the creation of visual art. In the sense of the importance of context and communicative potentiality, there are similarities between Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of the utterance and children’s multiple languages in the Reggio Emilia approach. When I define the term visual utterance, I aim to capture the moments of communicative practice when children were creating visual artistic creations. When the children were communicating with others, the visual image would be the mediation of their interpretation of the world, experiences, and way of life. In addition, the visual utterance is not finite, but rather captures the fluid moment of communication. This is similar to the Reggio Emilia approach in terms of the focus of communication and interaction. However, the visual utterance places more emphasis on how children sense others in the relationship between the viewer and the child, how children acquire the socially expected views, and how children make representations in their visual utterances while experiencing the processes of conflict and struggle through social practice. Further, visual utterances have a collective communicable meaning derived from the use of sociohistorical signs and the context in which the child is located. In the evolution of images created by children, the visual is focal to the communicative event, which represents children’s internal negotiation of their own voices, their past experiences, their current relationships and influences, and the implications of future discourse. Inside visual utterances are manifold structures of meaning that present the location of the child and the particular context.
Multiple Ways of Communicating Through the Arts

There were many different dynamics in the interactions and communication among students; I identified 23 patterns of verbal and visual utterances. Except for the pattern of talk to self, which included spelling, mumbling, and self-regulatory talk, the emerging patterns specified the various ways children communicated. Even in the pattern of self-regulatory talk, which was sometimes mistaken as social speech, it sometimes opened up the conversation from that moment. The pattern of social talk was distinctly different for children when they were directing talk to an adult or when speaking to their peers. When children talked to an adult, their comments and questions implicitly expressed the power relationship between the adult and the child. In the pattern of social talk, when children targeted an adult with whom to start a conversation, it was for the purpose of verifying instructions and seeking permission, seeking recognition from the adult, and informing someone of what another student was doing. All these forms of talk indicated that children recognized the authority over them, in contrast to peer-to-peer utterances. In the pattern of peer-to-peer utterances, the children developed a sense of sameness with their peers, expressed concern, and competed with each other. Peer-to-peer utterances showed that the child was in consistent interplay with other children. They sometimes wanted to be similar to others, they cared for each other, they confronted each other, and they competed with each other. The recognition of power relationships, stratification, and struggles through discourse have an important place in Bakhtin’s theories. As stated briefly in Chapter 4, Bakhtin posited two different types of discourse in communication: 1) authoritative discourse and 2) internally persuasive discourse. In this research, because I mainly investigated students’ discourse, the teachers’ remarks are not represented as frequently in the analysis. However, students’ discourse targeted to an adult certainly had unique characteristics. When directed to an adult, social talk was presented sporadically across the process of art making, from the beginning, to the middle, to
the end, but it was usually presented at the beginning, when children were verifying their actions to the adult, and at the end, when they were seeking recognition, as in “Look at what I made.” From this point of view, we can infer that children considered the adults’ view to a great extent. In collecting data, I sometimes inquired of my focal students about their art making. In examining the data, difference between spontaneous student–student discourse and answering an adult or directing talk to an adult (me) could clearly be seen. For example, Edward was sometimes reluctant to share his art making, especially when he was in the middle of making art. At the same time, he was actively interacting with peers to give comments, offer criticism, or play with them. It may be that Edward opened his world only to children. In peer-to-peer utterances, I also observed struggles as well as harmony among students. In student–student discourse, sometimes a certain student would assume a more authoritative stance over another. For example, when Kathy wanted to tutor Sylvia, there were subtle moments when Sylvia evaded the situation. In my observations, the children often thought of drawing something as a kind of ability or accomplishment, a mastery of something. Numerous times, I heard, “I know how to make a house,” and I observed children repeat that subject matter. In other words, I think they wanted to make what they could make. According to McClure (2008), visual fluency is a very important factor in the creation of art: “Children develop in their ability to make both more accurate and visually realistic drawings that communicate more fluently in their social worlds” (p. 243). Thompson and Bales (1991) summarized Korzenik’s description of the mastery of visual articulateness as follows:

Korzenik (1973–74) concluded that “children seem to learn that pictorial communication is contingent on what is visible on the paper. They appear to learn to inhibit any extraneous behavior that is outside the graphic medium” (p. 20). Children appear to “learn the rules of representation through the practice of drawing in the social context” (p.
17). As children speak to each other, they learn to create images that speak for themselves. As they confront incomprehension, they modify their drawings to allow the graphic medium to carry their meaning, unassisted, to anonymous viewers. (pp. 47–48)

When children acquire visual fluency, they seem eager to share their achievement with others, and they want to show their advances in visual fluency to others who have or have not yet achieved that goal. It is interesting to see the ways in which children adopted the voice of their more dominant peers in discussing one another’s work. Children construct communicable meanings through the art-making process, and they develop their sense of what skills and subject matter have the most cultural capital. It is interesting that the social value of a subject is a very important factor in choosing that subject.

In defining visual utterances, I mainly focused on the communicative aspects of children’s art and developed three larger categories: inner communication, person-to-person communication, and drawing on the larger social discourse. Inner communication includes expressive representations and visual narratives. When the children developed their stories through the visual arts, they sometimes created fantasies through their artistic practice, created their own stories, and made a series of the same subject with variations. In addition, it was interesting to notice the pattern of transformation in their art making. I observed many times how children changed their minds when making one art project, depending on the situation, conversation, mood, or difficulty of the subject and the medium. This fluidity and flexibility was noticeable in their art-making process, and it is an important step in how they learn art making as a social practice. Their attention changed quickly, so the phenomenon of transformation sometimes originated from their improvisation, when they thought of other topics. Additionally, it often depended on the flow of discussion around the table. Very often, when others valued a certain topic or theme, their minds changed with the flow of interest.
Figure 38. Daniel’s Rabbit Alien, Chinese ink.

In person-to-person communication, I detected patterns of intersubjectivity, addressivity, and relational aspects in making visual utterances. The children seemed to want to build their knowledge together through the processes of sharing information and collaborating. In addition, the reciprocal process of copying was observed when they copied and exchanged subjects with their peers. For example, in Chapter 5, when Mary (pseudonym) attracted the attention of the others for her bunny rabbit, Daniel quickly adopted her idea and transformed his drawing into a bunny rabbit alien (Figure 38). Before that, Mary also appropriated Daniel’s alien theme in the beginning of the process when others at the table expressed their liking for Daniel’s picture. In the repeated action of these give-and-take influences on each other, the children learned about each other. This corresponds to Bakhtin’s (1981) view of languages, according to which we are continuously adopting and appropriating someone else’s utterances. This notion of appropriation also applies to understanding the reciprocal process of making art, such that children’s visual utterances can be interpreted as collages of appropriation. Bakhtin (1986) stated,

[When a listener perceives and understands the meaning of another’s voiced utterances,] he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude towards it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), argues it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on. . . . [Likewise, a speaker] does not expect
passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his or her own idea in someone else’s mind. Rather, the speaker talks with an expectation of a response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth. (pp. 68–69)

The last category, namely, drawing on larger themes in the social discourse, was identified in cases of the inclusion of other voices. It is in larger ways that people (children) are influenced by social norms and cultural values, and these were indirectly represented in the children’s art. Whereas person-to-person communication occurred in a direct contact zone when children were interacting person to person, the influences of the larger social discourse were often invisible but at the same time powerful. More specifically, when children borrowed sources from other cultural discourses, this was identified as the inclusion of other voices, especially with regard to gender and citationality.

![Figure 31. Daniel’s Snowman With a Hat, modeling clay.](image)

When Daniel added the hat to his modeling clay(Figure 31), Edward commented, “It looks like a queen hat,” and further asked if the subject was a boy or girl. Edward went on to comment, “It looks like a girl.” Up to this point, Daniel had not reacted to Edward, but Daniel explained to him that the subject was a boy because he had a hat. Edward soon retorted, “A girl has a hat too.” Hereupon, Daniel remarked, “But this one has a big one.” This episode of
the snowman’s hat implied how he perceived this marker of gender. Daniel explained the differences in gender by using the concept of big and small for boys and girls, respectively, and his interpretation of the hat was as an object that should be used by boys. The concept of big and small as equated with a gender difference could be deduced as arising from his process of identity formation as a boy. Bakhtin (1986) emphasized that there are at least two voices in discourse, and he was concerned about authoritative discourse. As in the perception of gender from the episode above, larger social discourses can be interpreted as having an authoritative voice that works on children as they draw.

To better understand the communicative aspects of children’s art making, I identified 23 patterns within both their verbal and visual utterances. In the analysis of one art-making event, multiple types of utterances, different purposes, and various influences were identified as operating together. Taken together, I found that both verbal and visual utterances were formed from various types of utterances, from individual voices to social voices, and that the utterances had different purposes, such as art-related talk, play talk, self-talk, personal stories, and social talk. Children’s various utterances acted together in creating utterances that emerged from internal negotiation, multiple relationships with others, and influences of the larger social discourse. In the children’s creation of visual utterances, I observed their visual images as being products of the intersection of complex aesthetic, social, individual, and relational aspects of meaning within that context.

**Children’s Art Making as a Dialogic Process**

Bakhtin’s (1986) notion of dialogism suggests a more extensive realm for understanding children’s art making. One core idea of dialogism is to consider discourses as belonging to the whole community. Bakhtin viewed discourses as always being located in sociohistorical venues and saw these discourses as constantly communicating with both prior and upcoming dialogues. Children’s verbal and visual discourses are constructed of past
utterances that help form their utterances in the future. In this ongoing process, children acquire shared knowledge of their community (Duncan, 2007).

The next episode presents the dialogic aspects in children’s art making, and illustrates the characteristics of citationality in particular.

Figure 41. Edward’s boxes, modeling clay.

Edward: That looks like a walrus. (looking at his box made of modeling clay, Figure 41)

Edward: Daniel, do I look like a walrus?

Daniel: No.

Edward: I want to be a walrus.

Daniel: Walruses are not real.

Edward: Yes, they are.

Daniel: It’s like Harry Potter.

In this part of the transcript, the boys had an interesting real–fake conversation in relation to a cultural media influence. These twin brothers’ argument about what is real and what is fake indicated the context in which they were located. Because Bakhtin (1981) regarded an utterance as a sign of space and time, it is relevant to deduce the dialogic relationship between the larger social discourse and our everyday talk. In this case, the twin brothers used several cultural media references. This shows that they were acquiring and
utilizing broad culturally situated language systems and larger social discourses into their
everyday dialogues.

Edward kept talking about his favorite subject, a walrus, based on his love of animals. He projected his view toward his artwork: “That looks like a walrus.” Moreover, Edward questioned Daniel to find out if he looked like a walrus: “Daniel, do I look like a walrus?” Daniel argued that the walrus was not real and Edward did not believe it. Here, Daniel explained that the walrus was not real because “It’s like Harry Potter.”

From this point of view, Daniel also used a citation to make his argument that the walrus was not a real: “It’s like Harry Potter.” To continue the conversation, he borrowed information about a famous fictional character from the fantasy novel created by J. K. Rowling. Bakhtin (1981) claimed that we use utterances that were previously used by others. To communicate with others, we speak and use ideas and words that other people have developed, combined, and used previously. This study revealed that the children had their own favored subjects and that they revisited these themes repeatedly. They were beginning to relate the external world to their own cultural productions and to consider what the distinctions were between the real and the fantastic.

Here, I present another example of the dialogic aspects of the visual utterance. Daniel created a series he called Walking Alien in the Nightmare Garden, Doggy Brown Alien, and Rabbit Alien. He also selected the subject of germs twice on that day. He maintained the alien theme but drew on a variety of voices from his peers’ talk and opinions. Even though he initiated the human-type alien, he expanded the idea of the alien in constant interaction with the rabbit, brown doggy, and alien in the nightmare garden. He seemed to use past discourses and contextualized current practices in creating his series of drawings. At that point, Daniel’s drawings were acting as cultural tools, reflecting the ideological environment in which he was participating.
Another important finding I observed while Daniel was making the *Rabbit Alien* (Figure 38) was when Mary talked about Max and Ruby, two rabbit characters from Rosemary Wells’ famous children’s book series: “I’m gonna make Max and Ruby” (line 122). Mary drew a bunny rabbit and discussed what it looked like with Edward. In their active discussion and critiques of the bunny rabbit, Daniel chose his third drawing, the *Rabbit Alien*. Edward questioned whether Mary’s rabbit looked similar to the original character: “Daniel, does it look like a bunny rabbit?” (line 129). Their conversation about the bunny rabbit shows the influence of cultural media. Their conversation indicated the context. In this observation, the children used cultural media references from Max and Ruby. Mary first cited Max and Ruby when drawing her subject and then added more detail to it. Meanwhile, Edward questioned her about her drawing of the bunny rabbit, and Daniel critiqued it. Shortly after the conversation between Mary and Edward, Daniel initiated a depiction of a rabbit in his drawing of the rabbit alien.

To explain children’s use of the cultural media references to Max and Ruby, I turn to the writings of Joe Tobin. In Tobin’s book *Good Guys Don’t Wear Hats* (2000), he used Bakhtin’s ideas to analyze children’s talk in terms of the children’s media literacy, to
understand their actual discourses and the larger social discourses they reference. In Tobin’s analysis of children’s dialogues in response to a researcher’s questions on imitative violence, he pointed out the children’s citation of media sources. He explained that when the researcher asked the children’s opinions on imitative violence, they borrowed references from the broader cultural discourse. By showing the wide usage and circulation of the children’s words, Tobin illustrated children’s perpetual citations when speaking and communicating or delivering meaning. Similar to Bakhtin, Tobin (2000) concluded that children’s constant use of citations in creating dialogue constitutes their communication: “Everything we say and write cites, copies, mimics, plagiarizes, and/or parodies something someone else has said or written before” (p. 26). Thus, in Tobin’s view, any meaning is citational because any discourse makes use of references all the time.

In addition, in the *Rabbit Alien* picture (Figure 38), interconnected voices (heteroglossia) could be detected. In analyzing this picture, I borrowed Bakhtin’s (1986) questions, “Who’s doing the talking?” “What is going on?” and “For whom are the discourses produced?”

![Who is doing the talking?](image-url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Voice</th>
<th>Daniel’s favorite subject of the alien</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person-to-person communication</td>
<td>Addressivity (reciprocal process)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing on larger social discourses</td>
<td>Borrowing Mary’s subject of the rabbit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogic aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rosemary Wells’ children’s book series,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Max and Ruby</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Daniel’s creation of the Rabbit Alien drawing, in answer to the question of “Who’s doing the talking,” the interconnected voices were noticeable, such as his personal voice, the voices in communication with others, and the voice of the larger social discourse. On a personal level, Daniel kept his own theme of the alien, although he made a variation by adding the subject of the rabbit. Influenced by the dialogue with Mary, Daniel borrowed Mary’s subject of the rabbit. This reciprocal process and its dialogic aspects were the result of his communication and interaction with others. Moreover, citationality was present in the children’s discussion of Max and Ruby. In Bakhtin’s (1986) view, we are using words and languages that someone else has already used. In the process of producing utterances, struggles arise from the conflict between these voices. In Daniel’s picture of the Rabbit Alien, he seemed to maintain his voice with the transformation of the subject (“I’m making an alien like a rabbit”) even though he may have been affected by other voices. To quote Bakhtin (1981),

It is heteroglossia. It is about specific points of view on the world, forms of conceptualizing the world in words, specific worldviews, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people (p. 292)

This tendency to make meaning by interacting with other sociocultural discourses is discussed in the next section in more detail.

The Self–Other Relationship and the Space of Authoring

In this section, I present how others function in children’s art and how children make meaning during the process of communication. The concept of intersubjectivity is based on a strong connection between the self and other. This segment highlights how others function when children are making visual art, which was traditionally considered to be a self-
contained process. The self–other relationship is essential for understanding the notions of
dialogism and intersubjectivity as communicative aspects of children’s art-making process. It
is also derived from the concept of ideological becoming in relation to looking at the function
of others in children’s early learning and communication process.

In the previous chapter, I described how Daniel created visual art. In the process of
making successive drawings, there were several moments when Daniel was aware of others.
He invited others to look at his drawings, subjects, and knowledge with a series of remarks:
“Look at my alien” (line 37), “Look at my germs” (line 37), and “Look at what is my name”
(line 179). These kinds of remarks meant to gain recognition from others were among the
most common. I coded this remarkable phenomenon, in which children sought recognition
from others, as one type of social talk among the verbal utterances that occurred in their art-
making process.

Figure 37. Daniel’s Doggy Brown Alien, Chinese ink.

When Daniel created the fourth drawing, Doggy Brown Alien (Figure 37), Mary
announced three times that her subject matter was a puppy dog before Daniel named his
drawing: “That’s a puppy dog” (line 97), “That’s a puppy doggy” (line 99), “Sylvia, it’s my
puppy doll!” (line 103). Soon after Sylvia admired Mary’s drawing, “That’s a cute dog” (line
107), Daniel immediately named his drawing a *Doggy Brown Alien* (line 108). Daniel was definitely influenced by Mary’s words (copying and exchanging subject matter). On this particular day, Mary said repeatedly that her subject matter was a puppy dog/doggy/doll, and her peers responded positively to her artwork. In addition, Mary spoke loudly and expressed a strong opinion. The reason Daniel was inspired by Mary’s remarks in making his fifth drawing was not only because Mary continuously addressed her subject matter and her peers liked it, but also because she seemed to speak in a more assertive voice and with confidence. In observing Daniel throughout the data collection process, it seemed that Daniel placed importance on what others thought of his artwork. He talked to others and invited them to think about his artwork, saying, “Look at my alien” to gain recognition from them. He usually liked to be recognized by both adults and peers. At the same time, he was easily influenced by others’ opinions, actions, and subject matter. Here, I would argue that Daniel was in the middle of an active process of ideological becoming, the process of developing ways of seeing.

Bakhtin’s term *authoring the self* refers to “the meaning that [we] make of ourselves” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 173). Through constantly interacting with others and facing different perspectives, the self makes meaning through the process. Human beings exist and act, influenced by the environment. Likewise, human beings are exposed to many impetuses. We sometimes ignore certain stimuli, sometimes react to them, and make meaning through the process.

The point of the space of authoring is related to the notion of the subjective meaning of social action, which was further investigated by Alfred Schutz. Schutz was influenced by Max Weber, who developed the discussion of sociology and subjectivity (Embree, 2006). The subjective meaning is how we make sense of matters, acts, and interactions as we live in the world. In Schutz’s book *Phenomenology of the Social World* (1967), he pointed out that
our world is composed of others and that we are constantly conceiving it and affecting others in the process. The notion of reciprocity was derived from the acquisition of the social structure of our predecessors versus our successors, and our consociates versus our contemporaries. This relational aspect of human action and its subjective interpretation are similar to Bakhtin’s notion of the space of authoring.

We use other preexisting cultural tools in mediating our thoughts, for example, the language, visual arts, and so forth. According to Holland et al. (1998),

In such a diverse and contentious social world, the author, in everyday life as in artistic work, creates by orchestration, by arranging overheard elements, themes, and forms, not by some outpouring of an ineffable and central source. That is, the author works within, or at least against, a set of constraints that are also a set of possibilities for utterance. (p. 171)

_Ideological becoming_ refers to the way we shape our perspectives and beliefs within a social context. The ideological surroundings are where we are developing our senses in a particular society as accepting diverse norms, beliefs, values, and ideas. This could be the classroom, community, or anywhere we live and deal with these daily circumstances (Freedman & Ball, 2004). According to Bakhtin (1981), “our ideological development is . . . an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values” (p. 346). Bakhtin viewed social interaction as the best way to develop our ideological self. From this point of view, the roles of others are crucial to understanding the core of learning.

In the art-making process, it is clear that how others function is critical for the child. However, what we should not miss from the interactive and meta-relational aspects in communication is that the self makes meaning through authoring the world. In looking at the case of Daniel’s _Doggy Brown Alien_, it is interesting to observe how his drawings were
shaped largely through the influence of others (i.e., by borrowing the subject from his peers). He also made his own space by adding his own twist and keeping his own voice (i.e., keeping his subject an alien).

**Question 2**

In the previous section, I discussed the communicative aspects of children’s art making. In this section, I investigate how these communicative aspects of art making are tied to children’s learning. In my observations of the four focal students in the classroom context, I found that they learned from each other in this context through various communicative practices and for various purposes. To discuss the children’s learning in relation to their art making, I refer to Etienne Wenger (1998), who wrote, “The communicative ability of artifacts depends on how the work of negotiating meaning is distributed between reification and participation” (p. 64). In his book *Communities of Practice*, Wenger introduced the concept of learning as a social phenomenon. He defined two central concepts, participation and reification. He considered participation as actions and experiences in the social world, and reification as shaping our incidents and experiences, including creating artwork, writing letters, and so on. Wenger defined the idea of reification as “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (p. 58). He viewed the process of reification as the mediation of meaning. By interacting through the processes of participation and reification, we make meaning. Wenger extended the discussion of community by defining the central components of community as 1) mutual engagement, 2) a joint enterprise, and 3) a shared repertoire. Shared participation, reciprocal answerability, and shared collective interests are all central to understanding communicative practice. Among these features, I examined the characteristics of community as defined by Wenger by drawing examples from my data, such as the following.

Sylvia: How did you make pink? (She went to Edward to see how it worked.)

Edward: I made red and white together, and then it turned pink.

Sylvia: Red and white together (coming back to her spot). I’m making mine pink.

Edward: You’re stirring it, great! That’s my alien. Mine is darker pink. Yours is light pink.

Yellow? I don’t know what I mix in it.

Daniel: Edward, I made brown. I made a browny color.

Edward: How did you make that?

Daniel: Mixed the white, red, and red. I mixed a lot, a lot, and a lot. I made brown. I made brown. (Showing the color to everyone, but nobody was paying attention to him.)

Sylvia: I made pink.

Kathy: How did you make it?

Sylvia: OK. First, you use that white, stir. You can use yellow . . . and stir, stir, and stir it up.

Daniel: I made brown! (Nobody is paying attention to him.)

Sylvia: It’s peach.

Daniel: I made brown! (Still nobody is paying attention to him.) I made brown, Sylvia. I made brown.

Kathy: Are you going to make peach again?

Daniel: I made brown. (He is showing his brush to Kathy.)


The above example was previously introduced in the profile of Daniel when he was angry with the little attention and limited reactions he was receiving. However, in this section, I look at this episode differently, from the perspective of learning in relation to the mixing of
colors, rather than focusing on Daniel’s change of mood. Talk regarding the mixing of colors was one of the most frequent sequences of dialogue that took place during my observation period. The children were eager to share what they found when mixing colors, an extension of the fact that they liked to use the medium of paint. Sylvia always wanted to use paint, and later I realized that this was because she did not have many opportunities to use paint at home or in the classroom. When Edward found out how to make pink, it aroused the interest of the other children, especially the interest of the girls. Sylvia approached Edward and watched to see how he made pink. Coming back to her spot, she first experimented with making the color pink and later added yellow, resulting in the color peach. Although Sylvia followed Edward’s instructions, she acquired the knowledge on her own through practice and finally made a new color, peach, by herself. In Wenger’s (1998) definition of learning, he identified major aspects of learning within communities of practice, such as “evolving forms of mutual engagement,” “understanding and tuning their enterprise,” and “developing their repertoire, styles, and discourses” (p. 65). In his view, learning is based on social practice, and at the same time, it has evolving characteristics. In the episode above, children’s mutual engagement in experimenting with color is evident. While Edward, Sylvia, and Kathy were making the color pink together, Daniel was also engaged in mixing colors and making his own brown color. Further, Sylvia developed her own peach color after adapting Edward’s instructions. From this point of view, one could say she was investigating her repertoire based on Edward’s experiment.

From an adult’s point of view, the method of mixing colors to create a new color is not surprising because we already know how to make pink and other colors. However, I observed the children’s delight in making colors because they were in an early stage of discovering how colors are made. I noticed numerous times how they discussed colors when I brought the medium of paint to the art table. The children’s shared discoveries circulated
among themselves, and they practiced making their own experiments. As they processed these experiments with mixing colors, they gained an understanding of how to mix colors. The lesson of color might be classified as a scientific experiment if one includes the concepts of primary colors and secondary colors. However, my point in describing this episode is to show how the children shared their learning, developed their repertoires, and engaged in the practice together.

Bakhtin (1986) theorized that the process of communication involves simultaneity and reciprocity. By engaging in discourse with others, the self can understand more when looking at some phenomenon or acquiring knowledge. Deborah Hicks (1996) discussed learning in this way: “Learning occurs as the co-construction (or reconstruction) of social meanings from within the parameters of emergent, socially negotiated, and discursive activity” (p. 136). This dialogic aspect of learning implies the importance of interaction and the dynamic process of learning (Koschmann, 1999). Bakhtin was also interested in the meaning produced in situated contexts. The vignette above with the children mixing colors shows how they were learning by practicing making colors together. When Sylvia created her own peach color, I interpreted this as a new development in her repertoire as she created her own meaning, in terms of her authoring space.

According to Thompson (1999),

The process through which images are selected and emulated is often very subtle, though there is seldom any attempt at subterfuge or concealment. Copying another child’s drawing seems to be considered the highest form of flattery, accepted as a legitimate way of entering an activity in progress and declaring common cause with another child. At times, no verbal interaction is involved as children simply draw companionably side by side. And, at times, inspiration for drawing emerges as
children compare their experiences in the world beyond the transitory society they share in their art class. (p. 65)

Reciprocity appeared naturally in children’s art-making process. In the same way the children were learning language through practice in the social environment, they were also learning how to draw through the social practice of reciprocity. Children’s circulated images and actions can alter their meaning in different situations, depending on how each child reacts to the repetition of images and discourses produced previously. In analyzing the children’s visual utterances, I identified their circulation of visual images, subject matter, and discourses within the theme of addressivity, to explain the reciprocal process. The circulation of messages is the actual process of creating discourse with a shared repertoire.

**Intersubjectivity as a Critical Part of Children’s Communication**

The phenomenon of intersubjectivity was categorized as an upper level category in the communicative aspects of the visual utterance. Specifically, in the category of person-to-person communication, several instances of intersubjectivity were observed, such as when children shared knowledge with one another or collaborated in their learning of art. 

*Intersubjectivity* can be defined as the inseparable relationship between the self and other. It refers to a shared understanding of the social world, which is a crucial feature of human communication. Since the term intersubjectivity was first applied by Immanuel Kant (Platt, 2004), an increasing number of research studies have been undertaken on the concept of intersubjectivity in such diverse fields as literature, sociocultural studies in psychology (Budwig et al., 2000), and bilingual education (Ball & Freedman, 2004). The concept of intersubjectivity was visible when the children were drawing and talking (based on the coding categories), and it was especially visible in the children’s negotiating, knowledge sharing, and collaborative learning processes. Throughout the entire period of data collection, the children talked mostly around the art table. They talked about many subjects, but one of
the most frequent conversations occurred when they wanted to share something because of their own curiosity or to solve their own problems in executing the art-making process. They shared their own trial-and-error attempts with each other.

In previous transcripts, it was obvious that Edward was willing to share his discovery of how to make pink. Edward shared his findings about mixing those colors with others. In doing so, he encouraged others to acquire new information and to experiment with colors in a reciprocal process. He was eager to share his own discovery by informing others.

Regarding the learning aspect, the children promoted their understanding of knowledge by engaging in dialogue. When the children shared their understanding of something with each other, a moment of intersubjectivity existed. A similar concept, Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development, places importance on other input when children acquire something with the assistance of peers and teachers (scaffolding). Vygotsky held the view that human beings are subject to relying on culture and society and that humans make meaning through interacting with others and learning cultural beliefs. Vygotsky defined children’s zone of proximal development in the following way: “It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). It implies that children’s learning develops according to the assistance and input they receive.

Studies on the function of social influences on the individual and the relationship between the individual and society have been developing in the social sciences, psychology, and other fields. Similar to Vygotsky (1978)’s view of the cultural environment as a place where children’s development occurs, Bakhtin (1986) conceptualized the ideological environment as a place where the individual makes sense of the world and obtains a way to communicate with others by acquiring cultural symbols. Thus, both Vygotsky and Bakhtin
regarded cultural and social factors as playing a critical role in the formation of personhood. However, Bakhtin was more interested in individuality in the ideological environment and emphasized the dialogic relationship between an individual and the social world (Freedman & Ball, 2004). This is an important point regarding the notion of agency and how we develop self-consciousness in the process of ideological becoming.

What needs to be emphasized, along with the continuous intentionality involved in making meaning and speaking, is the importance of contextuality in grasping meaning from communication, based on the view that the construction of knowledge is a dynamic meaning-making process (Wells, 2001). The children in this study used cited images and sources from previously spoken, made, and created utterances from other cultural sources. Because meaning is related to its context, if other people's words are used in a different situation, different meanings will be generated. However, in the children's art making, they recreated these stories in their own voices. Sometimes they represented what they saw and what they heard as it was, and sometimes they recreated the story according to their own tastes. As mentioned earlier, Sylvia found she could make the color peach in the process of making pink. This reflects the fact that she recreated her painting process in a new context. From this point of view, meaning is locally produced and depends on the context.

Taken together, Bakhtin's theories developed the notion of learning, the interpersonal process of acquiring the importance of the other, and the process of how the self makes meaning. The reciprocal process of creating visual art promoted shared understanding (intersubjectivity), but at the same time, the children were aware of making their own space (alterity; Wertsch, 1998). The different characteristics of their communicative practices were based on the dialogicality of “the relational nature of all text” (Koschmann, 1999, p. 308). Thus, it was evident that learning is a communicative phenomenon, developed through interaction with others and other social discourses by negotiating meaning. Meaning is
created in a specific context, which is later practiced tacitly and then appropriated (Wertsch, 1991). The process of appropriation is similar to Vygotsky’s concept of internalization but is more inclusive. Here, appropriation refers to the dialogic and dynamic character of utterances, which are constantly communicating meanings (Duncan, 2007).

When investigating children’s art-making process by focusing on their actions, talk, and the visual images they created, what we should remember is that we need to value particular situated contexts and the children’s internalization processes as they develop their artistic selves (Walsh, 2002). Thus, children’s creation of visual utterances are intertwined with social phenomena (Wenger, 1998). Through the children’s communicative practices in the classroom setting, they shared their learning processes and developed their own meanings in a new context. During this process, they learned by doing, which led to further growth. In their creation of visual utterances, the visual images and words had a mediating function between their actions and the social discourse.

**Question 3**

This section discusses the third research question, “What are the implications of studying children’s communication through visual art for teaching children in early childhood?” Before discussing this question, I first provide a picture of the real classroom situation. I am grateful to Emily, the head teacher, for allowing me to observe her classroom. I interviewed her twice for 35 and 40 minutes, respectively, and she offered her opinions about art and her teaching philosophy. Interviews with Emily, observations of her classroom, and participation in the class gave me a collection of precious moments of the children creating art at the art table and by observing them, I found the answers I was seeking. In addition to the findings and implications from this research, I want to call attention to the gap between the teacher’s perceptions of art and the curriculum and instruction of art in the real classroom context, which hindered the teacher from seeing the children’s artistic potential...
and their artistic strengths. The following description was extracted from my first interview with Emily.

I think that art is very important in the classroom, because they are expecting so much out of the kids in this classroom and the curriculum is really extraordinarily high for them to get that much information into their day. And so a lot of the artwork and whatnot is somewhat of an outlet for that energy and expression so that they will not be left to feel overwhelmed and whatnot, and in their sense of expression and letting go in a little bit of me time, so to speak. So I think it is very important for the kids, because they have a full day as work in here every day.

They start out early and they do not go home until after their parents go home. So it is important for them, if they are going to have to be learning, to be doing things that are fun for them to learn and I think that art does help do that. That is communicate, self-expression, and communication whenever sometimes the words are not there, and without that kind of self-expression and communication throughout the day and happening to be in a classroom for 10 hours, I do not think that they would be able to do it. I doubt it.

If anything, the only limitations that we would have would be on our supplies, because we have the freedom to do pretty much whatever we want as long as we get the curriculum put into play as well. So if anything, it would be the limitations of the supplies that we have. I would love to be able to go Prairie Gardens and buy stuff, but we do not have the budget for it. But I would say definitely if we had a bigger budget, when it came to individual classrooms, I would be at Hobby Lobby and Prairie Gardens and places to be able to use a lot more mediums as far as different kinds of stuff, but I would say that would be the only limitation, as far as that goes, because we have the resources of using the Internet and pulling information off of the Internet and
the creativity of all the teachers and that and the resources of other rooms and the school itself. (Interview with Emily, November, 2007)

*Figure 42.* The goal of the art center hanging in the classroom.

From Emily’s perspective, art was important for the children so that they would enjoy the learning process when they stayed longer in the classroom. However, she pointed out that one limitation of doing good art lessons was their restricted budget. Even though she argued for the importance of art, I found that she saw art in a limited way and that it was devalued in this classroom (Figure 42), which was especially apparent when looking at the objectives of the lesson plans. For example, Figure 43 is a sample of the monthly objectives.

*Figure 43.* A month of lesson plans at a glance.

I collected 3 months of weekly objectives and weekly lesson plans for art in this classroom. During my observations, the goal of art learning included the following:

1. Traces, copies, and draws basic shapes,
2. Finishes a design with one missing piece,
3. Creates a three-dimensional model,
4. Uses various materials/media to create artwork,
5. Cuts out simple shapes,
6. Uses glue with some control,
7. Draws a complex picture, and
8. Draws a stick figure with 3 to 6 parts.

In looking at the objectives from the weekly lesson plans, I concluded that the purpose of art making in this classroom was constrained not by the children’s perspectives, but by the perspectives of the adults or the institution. Category 4, using various materials or media to create artwork, was presented consistently. However, it is clear, based on Table 4, that this classroom focused on the functional aspects of art and on the children’s sensory-motor development. From this point of view, the objectives of art were defined in limited terms.

Table 5

Analysis of the Objectives from the Weekly Art Lesson Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives for the art center</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traces, copies, and draws basic shapes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishes a design with one missing piece</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a three-dimensional model</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses various materials/media to create artwork</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuts out simple shapes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses glue with some control</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws a complex picture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws a stick figure with 3 to 6 parts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, the aims of the art center in the weekly lesson plans were to create heart-shaped light catchers (around Valentine’s Day), pictures of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, polar bears and cut circle shapes, tooth art, family scrapbook pages, copies of trees, and truck and car shapes. Even though Emily stated that she valued art in her classroom, it appeared that she focused only on the aspect of displaying the visual art and showing what the children did in the project. It is certainly a good idea to hang the children’s artwork on the wall, which would give them a feeling of achievement and would act as a kind of visual culture in the classroom. However, what I want to make clear is that the role of the teacher should be much more inclusive. It is a reality that most early childhood classrooms face the problem of limited resources and a limited time to prepare “special” art lessons. In addition, it is in the nature of the early childhood classroom to constantly experience drama, accidents, an enormous amount of interaction (whether good or bad), and issues of classroom management. However, one thing is clear: Stories abound, even when the children are creating art by using very accessible media, such as crayons, markers, and pencils. In my observations, it was amazing how complex their art-making process was—composed of communication, interactions, and the exchange of meanings around the art table—and at the same time, it was easy to miss moments of their communicative practices through art because these happened so quickly and many events were occurring simultaneously.

Based on my interview with Emily, it is important to emphasize the need to look at children’s art-making process from a broader and deeper perspective. The next transcript is derived from my first interview with Emily, when I asked her opinion regarding whether the teachers’ input is important in children’s art making.

I do not think it is quite as important; I think that it would be restricting it somewhat if the more input would be probably be restricting their own creativity. So once if they do not understand what they are supposed to be doing or if they need help
with the tools that they are using as far as their cutting and whatnot, then sure, of course, you are going to help, because you are wanting them to learn to use scissors correctly or making sure that they are not making too big of a mess or spilling whatever they are using or whatever. But as far as anything else, we can clean it up anyway and it is not that serious. If you put pressure on them as to doing it right, then they are probably not going to be doing it as easily, they are going to come out probably the same, and it is also going to put a damper on their fun, so the next time they may not want to do it so much. So I do not want to [do it].

I think that you would not give them tools that they could not necessary use anyway or that it would be a danger to them, so it is not that serious anyway. It was supposed to be fun and if it is not going to turn out exactly the way it is supposed to. . . But maybe that is the reason why we found olive green in the first place, because people messed up their colors whenever they were putting them together. Maybe someone accidentally put yellow and black together and got that color and [it] turns out, hey that is a pretty cool color, so it is an accident. I think it is the most important that they have experience and not necessarily as important for them just to play.

(Interview with Emily, November, 2007)

Emily seems to perceive the major role of art as being fun and as an opportunity for children to gain experience with materials and substances. Her choice not to interrupt the children during their art making is based on the classic notion of self-expressionism. When I inquired what her art experiences were when she was young, she said her experiences in art lessons were similar to those she taught in this classroom, such as playing with Play-Doh, cutting and pasting, and painting. This is not surprising because human beings, including teachers, have a tendency to repeat what they have learned from their own school days. Even though she acknowledged children’s socialization at the table and the communicative aspects
of art (based on my second interview with her), she seemed to revisit the classic notion of art teaching, just as she had learned when she was young. It is difficult to change perceptions, but teachers should acknowledge how critical their role is for early learners. When the philosophy of Vygotsky (1978) became widely recognized in the field of education, we learned the importance of the role of education, as well as of inputs by the teachers and other students, on children’s learning. Thus, teachers can be facilitators of learning and mediators during children’s dynamic communication process. Therefore, based on this research, it is important to call attention to the fact that teachers in early childhood education need to see the dynamic nature of children’s art-making process and the fact that they are engaged in making multiple layers of meaning. Emily mentioned how long children stay in the classroom; thus, the classroom as a community would have a strong impact on children as a place where they can learn together. I believe that the recognition of a broadened realm of visual arts and an understanding of the complex process of creating visual utterances would promote interactive communication through the arts and at the same time foster the children’s living and learning experiences.

The last point in the implications of my research is the notion of answerability. In Bakhtin’s (1981) definition of the utterance, the dialogue is composed of the initial utterance, a reply, and the relationship between the two. Bakhtin discusses the relationship between the speaker and addressee, and in this study, it was apparent that children expected others to reply when they created their visual utterances. Further, they reacted to the reactions of others, especially the reactions of the teachers and parents. Consequently, it is important to emphasize that teachers’ responses and their understanding have a very important place in children’s art-making process.

Regarding the communicative aspects of children’s creation of visual utterances, I want to highlight the relational aspects, the alterity in how they developed their own voices
by interacting with others and larger social discourses, and the dialogic aspects of how the different voices came together. This research suggests the need to listen to children’s struggles, their voices, and their growth through the creation of visual utterances, rather than holding a limited view of the complex nature of their meaning making. In addition, teachers should recognize the power of the classroom as a community situated in a particular context. A dialogic process that is dynamic and fluid depends on participants engaging in dialogues and exchanging perceptions. The importance of context lies in the fact that we share and live within specific contexts (Graue & Walsh, 1993). This focus on the social and relational nature of context in children’s lives is an attempt to understand children more carefully and more fully.

**Conclusions**

The aim of this research was to investigate the communication that occurred during children’s art-making process by observing what the children said, how they interacted, and how they communicated with each other; what images they created; and what cultural sources they cited and how they cited it when making art. To search for the communicative aspects of children’s visual art, I applied Bakhtin’s theories of communication, dialogue, and dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) to develop the conceptual framework of this study. I carefully investigated the visual art experiences of four focal children in a preschool classroom by closely observing their art-making process. To identify how the children communicated, negotiated, and interacted around the art table, I performed a series of participant observations of the four focal children at the beginning of data generation. In the next step, I used multiple methods (audio, video, and photo recordings) to capture these students’ art making by zooming in on each student one by one. The coding categories for their verbal and visual utterances were generated by reflecting on the whole data set collected in an effort to identify the communicative aspects of their art making. Based on the emergent
coding system, three primary types of communication were identified: Inner communication, Person-to-person communication, and Drawing on larger social discourses in their visual utterances. In children’s verbal dialogues, the patterns of talk to self, social talk, art-related talk, play talk, and personal stories were generated.

Furthermore, I presented an analysis focusing on the one-day art-making process of a single student, Daniel, because his process showed the flow of interaction and communication distinctly, and his production of images involved a multilayered process of creation. I focused on a single child because it was a better means of understanding how this child addressed himself in visual art making through constant interaction with others, to better comprehend how his art-making process was fully occupied by many social factors, such as intersubjectivity, addressivity, citationality, and alterity, in a short time sequence (26 min, 7 s), based on the video recording of the day. In addition, in this detailed analysis of Daniel’s one-day art-making process, I tried to identify the balance between his verbal and visual utterances. I analyzed each visual image that Daniel produced (seven pieces in a series of calligraphic paintings) by looking at the pictures themselves, drawing on the context, and interpreting the pictures. I believe my decision to focus on only the case of Daniel in the analysis was needed for the purpose of displaying the data in a robust and detailed manner.

This study produced results that corroborated Bakhtin’s (1981) views of the dialogic aspects of utterances. For example, in Daniel’s drawings, we can see the interconnections among his personal voice, his person-to-person communication, and the larger social discourse. He valued others by inviting others’ opinions of his drawing, which resulted in high frequencies in the patterns of social talk and copying and exchanging ideas. In the visual utterances he produced, one can clearly see the conflict between his own interests and the influences from other factors, such as ongoing discussions with peers, commentaries, and
critiques. He acquired social meaning regarding how to make art and what art to make in the process of communicating with others.

Second, this study focused on valuing the visual images the children created. Discourse analysis was used to understand their pictures, as well as to explore the children’s dialogues, their actions, and the context in which these occurred. It was interesting to see how the children developed communicable meanings through the visual arts. However, more research analyzing the visual images that children create needs to be undertaken as a means of listening to children’s visual utterances—what they are saying via pictures.

Third, it should be pointed out that children live in a heteroglossic environment. The classroom environment can be understood as a place where heteroglossia exists in the differentiated speech genres of the teachers (adults), children, and their mutual involvement in larger social discourses (Duncan, 2007). One can clearly see the difference between spontaneous student–student discourse and children answering an adult or directing talk to an adult. In peer-to-peer utterances, I observed struggles as well as harmony among students.

The category of drawing on the larger social discourse was identified in cases of the inclusion of other voices. Whereas person-to-person communication occurred in a direct contact zone when children were interacting with one another, the influences of the larger social discourse were invisible but at the same time had considerable power. The questions of who is doing the talking, to whom this utterance is addressed, and in what context (Bakhtin, 1986) can be applied to comprehend the practices children use in art making that reflect the processes of their peers, the culture, and the adults engaging in discourse.

Fourth, it is critical to see how children keep developing self-consciousness by responding to others and the larger social discourse during the creation of visual art. The visual arts, as a genre of cultural discourse, provide a place where children can learn about relationships among the self, others, and society. The process of making sense of the self, and
what is within the self, is a process of learning through contact with others, social values, and discourses. Through the visual arts, children were developing self-consciousness while simultaneously negotiating social values and voices from others.

Taken together, it is important to call attention to the fact that we need to recognize the dynamic nature of children’s art-making process and the fact that they are engaged in making multiple layers of meaning. This research suggests the need to listen to children’s struggles, their voices, and their growth through their creation of visual utterances, rather than holding a limited view of the complex nature of their meaning making. In addition, teachers should recognize the power of the classroom as a community situated in a particular context.
REFERENCES


## Appendices

### Letter to the Parents

**Dear Parents:**

You are invited to participate in a research project on the Communicative Aspects of Children’s Art Making. This project will be conducted by Hyunsu Kim, from the Art Education Department at Penn State University.

I’m pleased to have the opportunity to work with you for my dissertation project. The purpose of this research is to obtain new perspectives on children’s artistic process. In this research, I will observe the art activities in a pre-K classroom and document the art activities with photography and video recordings. I would like to research your child’s art-making process by looking at the child’s narratives, interactions, and reflections on his or her aesthetic experiences. In addition, you will be asked to participate in two 20-minute interviews. In the interviews, which will be audiotaped with your permission, you will be asked to discuss your beliefs and experiences in relation to your child’s art making.

To conduct this research, research volunteers are being sought for 4- or 5-year-old children in the Chesterbrook Academy, Champaign, Illinois. Parental consent must be obtained if participants will be young children. Permission to conduct this research has been provided by the Chesterbrook Academy. Participation in this project by you and your child is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. The compilation of data and study results will be kept strictly confidential. Participants’ personal information will not be identified in any way. I will be the only person who has access to all the data. The qualitative research strategies in this study involve no deception. You may ask any questions about the procedures, and I will answer these questions to your satisfaction. There are no risks to your child’s mental and physical health in this study, beyond those encountered in everyday life.
If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 207 Art Cottage, University Park, PA 16801, or 1125 Baytowne Dr. #34, Champaign, IL 61822 (phone: 217-377-4014; e-mail: hzk120@psu.edu). You may contact the Office for Research Protections, 201 Kern Graduate Building, University Park, PA 16802 (phone: 814-865-1775) for additional information. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hyunsu Kim
Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University (Parents)

Title of Project: Communicative Aspects of Children’s Art Making

Principal Investigator: Hyunsu Kim, Graduate Student

207 Arts Cottage, Art Education Department
University Park, PA 16802
217-377-4014; hzk120@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Christine Marmé Thompson

209 Arts Cottage, Art Education Department
University Park, PA 16802
814-863-7311; cmt15@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this research is to obtain new perspectives on children’s artistic process. The researcher will examine children’s narratives and their reflections on their aesthetic experiences. Although many studies have been conducted to understand children’s art making, fundamental questions remain unanswered, and the artistic process itself, the origin of children’s motivation, and children’s patterns of interaction and communication remain undiscovered. I believe this research is a legitimate attempt to understand children’s drawing while focusing on the situation and context. By looking at children’s shared dialogues, their interactions, and their communication through and during the art making process, I believe this study will widen our understanding of children’s art making in context—how the children are making meaning through the
arts and the undiscovered messages they are creating. It is an attempt to understand children’s art making by searching for multiple roles and meanings in their drawings, and multiple approaches are needed to conduct research in this direction.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** The researcher will observe the art activities in a pre-K classroom and document the art activities with photography and video recordings. Mainly, the researcher will observe the students’ art making, looking in particular at their narratives, interactions with others, and choices of subject matter. The researcher will observe and record only students whose parents have given the researcher permission. In addition, the researcher will avoid observing and recording students whose parents have denied permission for this project. If you give permission for your child to participate in this study, you will also be asked to answer some questions about your beliefs and assumptions regarding children’s art making. The researcher will also ask some questions regarding your child’s art experiences. These questions will be asked in two 20-minute interviews, to be scheduled at your convenience, during the time the research is in progress.

3. **Discomfort and risks:** Risks are minimal. Most parts of this study will be conducted within the child’s classroom routine. In addition, interviews with your child will be conducted to hear the child’s stories about his or her drawing activities and strategies. If you are willing to share what your child is thinking about his or her art-making process, you will be asked to share your opinions of your child’s artistic process with the researcher.

4. **Benefits:** Through this study, both children and adults can have a real chance to understand the value of art, the importance of social interactions, and the role of communication in children’s drawings.
5. **Social benefits:** This research will promote our understanding of art learning and the communicative aspects of art making. It will further promote alternative learning.

6. **Duration:** The researcher will visit a classroom for 4 and 5 year olds at the Chesterbrook Academy, Champaign, Illinois, two times each week for a period of 3 months. The researcher will be involved in each observation for 2 hours per visit. The children who participate in the study are not being asked to do anything more than what is conducted in the classroom.

7. **Statement of confidentiality:** Your child’s participation in this research is confidential. Only the person in charge will have access to the recordings. The researcher will protect the subjects by using pseudonyms (fake names). The data will be stored and secured. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

The entire set of audio, photo, and video data will be stored on CDs while the data are being analyzed. The researcher will transcribe all audio and video recordings. Participants will be identified by a pseudonym in all written notes and in the final presentation of this research. By doing so, the identity of the subjects will be protected. The researcher will use CDs and store those recordings in a locked room. Because only the researcher has access to these data, it will be saved safely. All the audio and video data will be destroyed 10 years after the research is completed.

8. **Right to ask questions:** Please contact Hyunsu Kim at 217-377-4014 with questions, complaints, or concerns about the research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections at 814-865-1775.
9. **Voluntary participation:** Your decision and your child’s decision to be in this research are voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawal from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would otherwise receive.

10. **Parental consent:** I give my consent for __________________________ to participate in the research

   (child’s name)

   entitled “The Communicative Aspects of Children’s Art Making,” which is being conducted by Hyunsu Kim. Participation is entirely voluntary; I or my child can withdraw consent at any time and have the results of the participation returned to me, removed from the experimental records, or destroyed.

11. **Audio- and videotaping, digital photos, drawings, storage, destruction, access to others:** Audio- and videotapes and digital photos will be made into and stored as CDs. Artwork will be scanned and stored on CDs. The CDs will be stored and secured at the investigator’s home office. Only the investigator will have access to the CDs. All materials except the CDs will be destroyed (notes will be shredded and video records will be removed from the original films) when the CDs are completed.

Please initial by the statement to designate your choice:

_____ I do not give permission to use the recordings/photographs/art work in professional presentations and/or publications.
I give permission to use the recordings/photographs/art work in professional presentations and/or publications.

You must be at least 18 years of age to take part in this research project. If you agree to take part in this research study and consent to the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

__________________________________________  _______________________
Participant Signature  Date

__________________________________________  _______________________
Person Obtaining Consent  Date
Letter to the Teachers

Dear Teachers:

You are invited to participate in a research project on the Communicative Aspects of Children’s Art Making. This project will be conducted by Hyunsu Kim, from the Art Education Department at Penn State University.

I’m pleased to have the opportunity to work with you for my dissertation project. The purpose of this research is to obtain new perspectives on children’s artistic process. I will observe and take notes of some classes that you teach and document the art activities in your school by using a camcorder and camera. In addition, you will be asked to participate in two 20-minute interviews. In the interviews, which will be audiotaped with your permission, you will be asked to discuss your experiences in relation to children’s art making.

The compilation of data and study results will be kept strictly confidential. Participants’ personal information will not be identified in any way. The qualitative research strategies in this study involve no deception. You may ask any questions about the procedures, and I will answer these questions to your satisfaction. There are no risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 207 Arts Cottage, University Park, PA 16801, or 1125 Baytowne Dr. #34, Champaign, IL 61822 (phone: 217-377-4014; e-mail: hzk120@psu.edu). You may contact the Office for Research Protections,
201 Kern Graduate Building, University Park, PA 16802 (phone: 814-865-1775) for additional information. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hyunsu Kim
Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

(Teachers)

The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** Communicative Aspects of Children’s Art Making

**Principal Investigator:** Hyunsu Kim, Graduate Student

207 Arts Cottage, Art Education Program
University Park, PA 16802
217-377-4014; hzk120@psu.edu

**Advisor:** Dr. Christine Marmé Thompson

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University Park, PA 16802
814-863-7311; cmt15@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this research is to obtain new perspectives on children’s artistic process. The researcher will examine children’s narratives and reflections on their aesthetic experiences. Although many studies have been conducted to understand children’s art making, fundamental questions remain unanswered and the artistic process itself, the origin of children’s motivation, and children’s patterns of interaction and communication remain undiscovered. I believe this research is a legitimate attempt to understand children’s drawing while focusing on the situation and context. By looking at children’s shared dialogue, interaction, and communication through and during the art-making process, I believe this study will widen our understanding of children’s art making in context—how children are making meaning through the arts and the undiscovered
messages they create. It is an attempt to understand children’s art making by searching for multiple roles and meanings in their drawings, and multiple approaches are needed to conduct research in this direction.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** The researcher will observe and take notes of some classes that you teach and document the art activities in your school by using a camcorder and camera. In addition, you will be asked to participate in two 20-minute interviews. In the interviews, which will be audiotaped with your permission, you will be asked to discuss your experiences in relation to children’s art making.

3. **Duration:** The researcher will visit a classroom of 4 and 5 year olds in the Chesterbrook Academy, Champaign, Illinois, two or three times each week for a period of 3 months. The researcher will be involved in each observation for 2 hours per a visit. You will be asked to talk with the researcher 2 times, with each interview lasting 20 to 30 minutes. I would like to observe and record normal classroom instruction time.

4. **Discomfort and risks:** Risks are minimal. Most parts of this study will be conducted within children’s classroom routine. In addition, interviews with children will be conducted to hear the children’s stories about their drawing activities and strategies.

5. **Benefits:** Through this study, both children and adults can have a real chance to understand the value of art, the importance of social interactions, and the role of communication in children’s drawings.

6. **Social benefits:** This research will promote our understanding of art learning and the communicative aspects of art making. It will further promote alternative learning.
7. **Statement of confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the person in charge will have access to the recordings. The researcher will protect the subjects by using pseudonyms. The data will be stored and secured. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

All the audio and video data will be destroyed 10 years after the research is completed. The recordings will be stored on CDs while the data are being analyzed. The researcher will transcribe all audio and video recordings. Participants will be identified by a pseudonym in all written notes and in the final presentation of this research.

8. **Right to ask questions:** Please contact [Hyunsu Kim](#) at 217-377-4014 with questions or concerns about this study.

9. **Voluntary participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

10. **Audio- and videotaping, digital photos, drawings, storage, destruction, access to others:** (a) Audio- and videotapes and digital photos will be made into and stored as CDs. Artwork will be scanned and stored on CDs. The CDs will be stored at the investigator’s home office, which is secure. (b) Only the investigator and her advisor will have access to the CDs. (c) All materials except the CDs and original drawings will be destroyed (notes will be shredded and video records will be removed from the original films) when the CDs are completed.
☐ I authorize the use of photographs, voice, and video performances for research and teaching. I agree to the investigator’s use, at her discretion and for perpetuity.

☐ I do not authorize the use of my photographs, voice, and video performances for research and teaching. I do not agree to the investigator’s use, at her discretion and for perpetuity.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and consent to the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form for your records.

_________________________________________________________  __________
Participant Signature                                      Date

_________________________________________________________  __________
Person Obtaining Consent                                  Date

ORP USE ONLY: IRB#26568
Doc.#3
The Pennsylvania State University
Office for Research Protections
Approval Date: 10/31/07 JKG
Verbal Assent Script for Children 4 to 5 Years of Age for Aspects of Children’s Art Making

Hello, my name is Hyunsu Kim. Your parents said it was okay for you to help with this study. We will ask you to explain your art work.

You do not have to help if you don’t want to.

Even if you start, you can stop at any time.

Would you like to help?
Interview protocol

Hyunsu Kim

Communicative Aspects of Children’s Art Making

This study investigates how children communicate through art by focusing on their art-making process. It is intended to explore how children create meaning, communicate their meanings, and interact based on those meanings by analyzing their conversation, mainly by focusing on their visual language and communication in the process of art making.

Interview Questions for Teachers, Parents, and Children

1. Teachers

How long have you taught? (further warm-up questions may be included)

What is your most important value in terms of child art?

What characteristics of an art lesson do you focus on when looking to improve quality?

Do you have any special stories related to children’s art making?

What kinds of art activities have you engaged in, or what curriculum have you taught?

If we say that art is a socialization process, which aspects of socialization have you observed among the participants (students)?

What are the most common features of children’s art-making process (e.g., copying, interacting, etc.)?

How much do you interact with your children when teaching the arts?

Please characterize these interactions. What is the nature of this interaction?

At which point (e.g., during the process, or at the end of the process)?

Do you think adult input, especially the teacher’s input, is very important in their art-making process?
Is there anything else you would like to tell us to emphasize the values regarding art that you use in your classroom?

Do you feel there are any limitations to doing a “good” art lesson?

Note: These questions are tentative, but I would like to know how teachers value the children’s art. It will be important to look at what they assume about the quality of child art, because teachers’ assumptions affected children directly and indirectly.

2. Parents

Would you begin by telling us about your family? (warm-up questions: How many children do you have? etc.)

What is your child’s favorite subject matter?

Would you describe your personal philosophy regarding art?

Do you think art is important for your child?

Why or why not?

Do you know why your child is fascinated with a certain thing (his or her favorite subject matter)?

Note: For parents, it is hard to develop interview questions, because I will ask questions as a means of understanding each individual child.

3. Children

When do you make art? At which times?

What do you usually draw?

Can you tell me about your art experiences?

Do you like making art? Why or why not?
Is there any particular reason you make art?

With whom do you share your art? Why?
VITA

Hyunsu Kim

Education
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 2012 PhD in Art Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL 2005 MA in Art Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, IL 2003 Ed.M in Curriculum and Instruction:
Specialization in Elementary and Early Childhood Education
Ewha Woman’s University, Seoul, Korea 2001 B.F.A in Painting

University Experience
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 2006
Co-instructor of AED 225: Diversity, Visual Culture, and Pedagogy
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 2005-2006
Graduate Teaching Assistant, ART 100: Concepts and Creation in the Visual Arts.

Awards/Honors

2010 Penn State Alumni Association Dissertation Award, The Pennsylvania State University

Publications