



## Developmental Review on Child Art

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**Abstract:** This paper looks at developmental review on child art and the best representation of child art. The development of a child depends heavily on what their mind and body interacts with. Art is the best way for this interaction to be made possible and is almost natural for every child. The function of the brain, the sensory nerves, and the motor skills are enhanced through child art. The way a child communicates back to what they see around them is through art which can be seen at the different development stages.

Further will look at the importance art, Art is important because it helps the child express their fears, ambitions and showcase their talent to the rest of the world. It can be used as a means of therapy to understand what the child is going through or what they may be struggling with. Also the role of gender and adults on children art, it should therefore be encouraged that every parent, guardian, or teacher should provide the materials for art and engage their children in a way that keeps their spirits high so that they may freely express themselves even as they grow older. Lastly is evaluation of stages of development on children. It is therefore important to acknowledge the stages of development in a child and especially through the use of art, from when they start to doodle unrecognizable lines to when they can balance their images and show their understanding of the world through art masterpieces.

**Keywords:** Child art, Child development stages, Scribbling stage, Pre-schematic stage, Schematic stage, The realism stage, Pseudo-realistic stage, Role of gender in art.

### INTRODUCTION

Children adore art because they use it as language to express how they feel and to communicate with the outside world where words may fail. Child art is an instrument for the children as they discover the world through intellectual, emotional and physical methods. Every child uses art to make their decisions, have fun with other children and themselves, and as a way to express their emotions. The use of art by children can be interpreted differently by the different viewers. To the child however, it is not a time to critique the final product that comes from art, but it is a time to enjoy the moment of painting different colors and making shapes and curved lines come to life. It is in art that the children gain the control of their thoughts and can deliver what they desire most from their thoughts to the canvas. Art is a child's way of understanding the world, interacting with it, and expressing what they feel about the world as their mind and body develops, without which the cognitive, sensory, and motor skills will not develop well.

### IMPORTANCE OF ART IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Art is personal for every child and is important for the development of the child (Earle and Curry, 2005). Friedrich Froebel also added that children are supposed to be given permission to create their own art as much as they would enjoy the art done by others. He observed that the application of art demonstrates an all-round growth of the child and encourage them to express themselves more. In the same sense, the art is a way that

makes the child come out of their cocoon of shyness and use the tool to express their desires and even fears. The child is satisfied when they take charge of the crayons and the paintings or even using plasticine and clay to make different models from their imagination. They are involved in making their own decisions an important part in their development as they decide what materials to play with or use to make their art. This is a way to raise their self-esteem since they make choices based on their emotions and what they think is best. It is at this avenue that the child may first learn how to accept criticism or even show appreciation of art done by others. They are involved in creative thinking where they will want to match the art done by others or even do something more creative by getting different materials and receiving feedback from others.

It is also through this art that the children explore their senses through the choice of colors they want to display or the movement of the brush or crayons on the paper. The child begins the whole process of art from their mind when they picture the object they want to display. They even take the opportunity to decide whether they will take much time on the project or just a little while and they will be done with it. They tend to go for the art that has been praised before or what they feel is pleasing to them. As the child develops, they move to use of symbols in their art and can start drawing or modelling pieces of art that look like real objects. It grows to reality. The child uses art to define their surroundings and expressing what they understand and feel. It is through art that the child will also move their limbs from side to side. Art helps in the motor development and is seen when the child can do long movements of their arm and at times short movements. This helps the mind and the arms articulate so that as the child develops they can easily grasp writing and other skills that require hand movements. There is also the coordination of the eye and the hand where the child decides what objects to use to fill the art they are creating. Through the eye-hand coordination they understand what space to fill or leave and it gives them the understanding of using spaces in formal writing.

In classrooms art is important for the child's development and the teachers are required to offer classes or involve the children in art. The teachers may give the children the opportunity to make art and display in the classroom as a gallery. They could also involve the family of the child in the art assignments and help the children express themselves easily both at home and school. The teachers could also arrange for trips to the museums of art galleries where the children could observe different art as well as gain new experience for new inspiration in which they could be asked to express what they experienced. Art is very important in the development of a child and as they grow they gain new skills which they express in art and can also be used in other areas of their life. It is also in art that the child will become creative and also appreciate other artistic works and cultures. Overall, the importance of art is that the child grows knowing how to express themselves in different ways. It is appreciated as a language for the children and from it, many things can be interpreted.

### **BEST REPRESENTATION OF CHILD ART**

Child art drawings and paintings shows the progress of the child as they grow. However, drawings illustrate more development compared to paintings because the crayons and pencils can easily be controlled by the child unlike the paint brush. The drawings are usually done for pleasure but through analysis, the drawings can be used for therapy and can also show the progress of the child development. Painting or drawing also enables the child to develop their cognitive, sensory and motor skills because it engages them in all these ways as they become aware of the environment surrounding them and express using art. Using drawings, the child can express their emotions and even tell stories (Mayesky, 2006). They can as well be used to show the intellectual development of the child. For instance, a child who has gone through crisis at home or in a past environment would want to share the story in form of a drawing. In the same way, the drawings can help the teacher or

guardian realize whether the child has a problem in learning. Use of different colors in the drawings also shows the different emotions that the child is experiencing. The drawings in this case can be used for therapy to help the child overcome their fears or gain freedom from traumatic events. For example, black and red colors show distress, danger or anger, while pink and yellow show affection and happiness.

## **DEVELOPMENT STAGES IN CHILD ART**

### **Scribbling Stage**

There are five main developmental stages in child art. The first developmental stage is scribbling. The child finds satisfaction in moving crayons and drawing lines and curves just to make a mark on a surface; a scenario which normally starts at around 14 months of age. The three main stages in scribbling are: disordered or random scribbling; controlled scribbling which contains longitudinal and circular scribbling; and naming of scribbling (Herr, 2001). The scribbling begins in a random fashion where the child moves their arms around and about the surface just to see that they are making marks on the surface using the tools they have in hand. The scribble is without shape and wavy. It requires little effort for the child to move their muscle on the surface. Previously it was thought that a child engages in scribbling for pure enjoyment of moving the crayons and to make a mark on a surface, however, it has been disputed by researchers of child art that the scribbling may be more complex since they use the scribbling to represent and express although with unrecognized forms.

The marks even go outside the paper and they the child does not concentrate on the paper most of the time – they are even distracted and look away from the paper while still making marks on it. Soon, they have a relationship with the random scribbling and they understand that the motions of their hands and the crayons make marks on the surface and begin to take control of the scribbles. They make calculative scribbles depending on the arm and wrist movements. The scribble is disordered and depending on the child's personality, the scribbled markings can be bold or light. They repeat certain lines or motions that give them satisfaction and pleasure. Here, they may also have longitudinal marks which later develop into circular motions. This shows that the child is conscious of the motor movements that are causing the marks that eventually develop into circular and complex forms. As the child develops in their art, they start naming their scribbles and characterizing their scribbles through imagination and they gain meaning in the mind of the child. The child uses the scribbling as way of sharing their stories with the audience and is a way of development which is seen to transform from kinesthetic thinking to imaginative thinking.

Later on, the child gains control of the scribbling by watching other children as they make art and they gain more understanding on how to use their mind and body. At around two years of age, they now understand the use of different muscles from their fingers, wrists and arms and how to move them. They keep memory on how to create different symbols and they develop their art skills by drawing even more recognizable objects. Precision is seen in their drawing and they can manage to keep the scribbling within the surface and maintain some focus on the surface. The teacher or the guardian of the child is required at this stage and assists in a variety of ways. They may provide the materials required by the child to make the scribbling easy for them and may start by providing appropriate materials such as the crayons, pencils and a white surface.

The guardian or teacher may engage the child in a conversation so as to be involved in their creativity and to help them express their scribbles. One could even ask the child some questions especially when they have started naming their scribbles. The dialogues should go around the image that has been represented. For instance, if the child has scribbled an image and called it their dog, one could engage them in the size of the dog, or does

the dog jump or run, or when do you play with your dog. This is a technique that helps the children to speak out their thoughts and feelings so that from art they can even express through speech. The guardian and teacher should always encourage the child by giving them positive remarks and appreciating their work. This is also a way to boost their creativity and make them interested in art.

### **Pre-Schematic Stage**

The second stage is the pre-schematic stage or the pre-symbolism stage which is observed when the child is about three to four years of age. This is where a child uses representational symbols because they have not developed schema – the visual. The child may use squares, circles together with a few lines to draw objects such as human and animal images. As the child develops, they begin to organize their symbols horizontally. Use of colors in the drawings is a form of expressing what they feel and can decide on what colors to use. The coloring is not according to logic. The ways in which the child grasps the reality of their environment is through observing what other children are doing and they can imitate their movements. Also, the child may try out different symbols to get what expresses the reality. Human figures are the most common images drawn at this stage.

The figures shown almost look like tadpoles because of the use of a circle and one or more lines stemming from the circle (Barnes, 2015). The use of tadpole-like representations suggests that the children do not fully understand or know the different features in a human. Therefore, they could leave out many parts. It is also understood that the children use the symbols to represent what they already know exists in the world. The teachers and the guardians of the children should understand that the children do so without knowing and cannot use this to assess the personality or intellect of the child. The teacher may go ahead and start educating the child so that they can be made aware of the different parts of the body. The child may be involved in activities that will help them learn the different body parts and their purpose for example through games and songs.

At four or five years, the child will use different symbols to illustrate the same figure and many times the symbols used will not be the same. The variations of the figures are altered by the feelings that the child has towards that object. The drawings are not based on their appearance but how they make the child feel. This is seen when the child may omit certain features in a drawing and at the same time emphasize on a particular feature. For instance, the child can elongate or draw multiple lines to show the arms of the mother that hugs her in a way to express how the child is attached to the mother and in the same drawing they may leave out the arms of the father. The child's expression in all figures means that they have not yet got the interest to fill in the details of all the figures as normally seen. The concern is developed at seven years.

The development of the child in relation to the understanding of the world makes them to involve new objects in their drawings. However, the size or shape of the objects are not proportional and also do not relate as seen in the world. The images appear to be floating because they do not take into perspective the three-dimensional representation of space but do a good work in drawing two-dimensional images. When drawing their portrait, the child will emphasize on a particular part, mostly their head. They show how they relate with the head more than the other parts of their body because it is involved in doing most of their work that is talking and eating. The art in this stage helps the child to become aware of them more and is used as a self-defining process. At this stage, the child is usually concerned about themselves and they could be encouraged to know more about themselves in this stage and assignments or activities that will help them express themselves more should be introduced.

## Schematic Stage

This stage is observed when the child is five years or six years of age. The child is able to draw symbols that represent the objects in their world. Schema refers to the use of repeated symbols to represent a specific object. They are still not as accurate as seen in the world because they come from the way the child understands the world rather than what they see. This is evident through the drawings of different children where the representation of a human form varies greatly. However, the drawing is more complex compared to one in the pre-schematic stage. The child can draw the human images with a head, a proportional body, and additional limbs at their right place. The child may also neglect the drawing of a neck or any other part because they may not see the need yet. The schema that the child develops of a certain object will mostly remain the same until the child gains a new experience that will make them change their visual images.

The shapes that are mostly used to represent the body are ovals, squares, circles, triangles, rectangles or any other irregular shapes. The shapes do not make sense when they are not used together. The use of repeated lines and enlarged shapes illustrates the emphasis of the action that the child wants to express. It is at the schematic stage that the child develops the usage of the baseline (Dean, 2016). This shows that they have gained the understanding of the space and the objects no longer float as before. The baseline shows that the child is conscious of the ground and relates the objects according to the space they occupy. At first, they draw multiple objects on the baseline such as trees or flowers, but they come to realize that the baseline can be used to as the floor where objects may be placed. They later develop multiple baselines or raised baselines each with its use. Sometimes the use of multiple baselines is for the child to illustrate the huge distance between the objects.

The child's understanding of their environment makes them to want to display the space with precision. The baseline is then replaced with a ground plane. The child also develops new ways to show space in their drawings as they also develop the concern for telling stories using space-and-time representations, top views, side views and X-ray drawings. The X-ray drawing is used by the child to show that the object is in a hidden place which is also enclosed and the need to use this style is to show that the object inside is of more importance than the objects outside. Children use images that they observe in their culture and society. The media has influence in children art since they are exposed to it in form of entertainment. They form a relationship with the imagery used in the media and would incorporate the ideas in their drawings as they saw them illustrated. Children may also develop their characters since they are amused by the display of those characters in television or comic books. The teachers and guardians of the child should encourage them so that the child may develop their skills in art and drawing. The child in the schematic stage uses more group objects that are in their surrounding compared to the pre-schematic stage where they used single figures. They can now show variations in distance and take into account the space and how the objects are organized. Although their representation is not realistic, they develop a sense of creativity and like to tell stories using the images and different styles.

## The Realism Stage

This stage is realized by the ages of nine and ten years as the child develops a greater understanding of the environment. The schema is developed and they become conscious of the details in the objects. The art has developed and so has the child, and they are now looking to produce adult-like art. The images that the child draws are natural and realistic in shape and size. The drawing is also organized and the skills are sharp. However, the children struggle to portray the object as it really appears and it becomes an issue for many who cannot achieve this. Children of the same sex become close friends and also become more self-critical. They go to the extent of copying other images illustrated elsewhere so that they can get the most realistic-looking image. It is in this stage that the child will withdraw from drawings because they criticize their images and feel that they fall short of the artistic abilities. This stage requires that the child should be instructed to get the best from their skills and achieve realism in their art.

Children at this stage are focused on whether the images they draw are a direct representation of the object they perceive. They use the ground plane more and place their images in proportional sizes. The focus of the child in art changes from two-dimensional to three-dimensional art. They also give more focus on the angle of the viewer in relation to the object and use diagonal lines to show perspective. The child in this stage should be taught on how to use the different ways to portray depth in their drawings so that they may also understand how adult artists draw. The teacher or guardian should be ready to ask the child to express their emotions using drawings. This should help the child to become original and creative. The child needs encouragement at this stage because they are desperate to draw images that are realistic. The child is fully aware of the images and can as well tell the story from the images.

### **Pseudo-Realistic Stage**

Others in the same stage continue drawing using symbols to express what they feel. They use images as abstract and representational forms to send a message. The child can also use singular objects in their drawing to express loneliness. They have grown and now understand that the image depicted may have different meanings and can be used as visual metaphor. The two psychological differences in this stage are visual or nonvisual. The visual look at their work without direct connection, whereas the nonvisual depicts their work which is connected to their feelings. The use of color for the visual is mainly to show the concept that may come from the external conditions whereas the nonvisual use of color is to express the emotions related to the image.

### **ROLE OF GENDER IN CHILD ART**

The differences between boys' and girls' choice of drawing is seen at the age of four to five years. The girls choose to draw round and circular shapes and symbols looking like flowers and hearts whereas the boys draw straight lines, boxes and angles. The children are also drawn to depict their gender more than the opposite gender in their drawing. In terms of content, the girls go for horizontal baselines and also like to balance their images while using more color in their drawing than the boys, and also use warm colors such as red whereas the boys go for cool colors. However, gender does not directly play part in choice of whether a child should choose painting over drawing. Both boys and girls appreciate art as they are handed the tools by their teachers or guardians and in their self-interest or search for satisfaction they may end up choosing painting over drawing.

A lot of research has been conducted concerning differences of sex and child art across children from different cultures and those who are in elementary school. It is evident that boys like to draw vehicles, monsters, and spaceships whereas girls like to draw princes and princesses, landscapes, people, and pets. The themes that boys go for seem to be supernatural, unrealistic, and not from everyday experiences. The girls draw realistic drawings and those that appear in everyday experiences. The sex differences have also shown great differences in terms of aggression depicted in art. Boys show more aggression in their art while girls show peaceful scenes. For example, when both boys and girls are told to draw anything around the word fighting, boys illustrated bodies which had been harmed and there was presence of weapons, but the girls drew less of the harm and less weapons representation.

There is also difference in the way both boys and girls express themselves using art. It is suggested that girls draw images that show happiness on the faces of people and in animals more than boys. When in an experiment that asked the children to express helping, the girls were involved more than the boys, and they showed more emotions in the drawing compared to boys. It is not known whether the judgements that the children make concerning the appeal of their drawings is because of their sex differences. Research has also shown that the measurements differ with the sex differences. For instance, girls have artistic skill when it comes to figure drawings whereas boys go for self-perceived competence and originality (Flannery and Watson, 1995).

## ROLE OF ADULTS IN CHILD ART

The adult, mainly a teacher or a guardian, does not have to be talented in art to give the child the experience they need to express them or find pleasure in art. There are different techniques through which art can be taught to the children. One of which is the teacher directed approach. This is where the teacher has the original idea of how the art will happen. The teacher gives the children materials such as crayons or pencils and a surface to work on and then gives the children a set of instructions to do. This technique is used with the whole group of children. However, this method undermines the children's ability to be creative and would make them not to grow to be original because of their dependence on what the teacher will instruct.

Another approach is the child-centered approach. This technique is meant to focus on the child alone and should not be structured in any way (Schirmacher and Fox, 2009). The teacher or guardian presents the child with materials that they can use for art but the teacher does not give them any instructions to follow. This technique allows the child to explore different choices. In this technique, the teacher can offer to suggest ways with which the children can be inspired. However, this approach may prove to be tiresome to some children who can't come up with new ideas to create art. They often end up inquiring from the teacher. The child-centered approach can make the children to draw anything because there are no restrictions or structures to follow. Also, this approach agrees with the development through child art since it allows the children to express themselves when the child draws and is therefore considered valuable because it shows development in many ways. The teacher's or guardian's intervention would affect the creativity of the child. This method requires no intervention from the adults except to setup the materials. However, the children require suggestions or source of inspiration that will help them to draw.

The teacher-directed and the child-centered techniques are extremes which have great limitations affecting the child who should be gaining experience through art and developing their cognitive, sensory, and motor skills. The other technique that comes as a mix of the two extremes is the teacher as facilitator technique. Here, the teacher gives the instructions of what is expected from the child's drawings. The teacher however does not touch on the details of the drawing. The teacher is allowed to give a general idea of what is expected and the children can then decide what materials they will use or what type of art they will create depending on what they feel is the best way to approach the teacher's idea. In this way, the child is engaged to be creative on their end, and also the teacher has given them a source of inspiration where they can start their creativity from.

The teacher could also bring new materials and introduce them to the students by engaging their thoughts on how the new materials can be incorporated in their art. The teacher as facilitator can also point out new techniques on how to use different materials to develop the same kind of art. This is to make the child open to creativity and helps them to come up with solutions that will help them in their development. Another way the teacher or guardian can facilitate for the children is by challenging them with a problem. This is a form of daring the child and it acts as a motivator for the children to challenge themselves to doing that which has been posed by the teacher as a problem and yet seems achievable.

Moreover, the teacher can use art and other disciplines to help in the child development. For instance, the teacher may want to know whether the drawing by a child has a story behind it. The teacher can also ask the children to make a play or create a poem from what they drew. The teacher's role, as that of the guardian, is to bring an abstract idea that will make the child think for themselves and be creative when choosing their final image. Art that is from the outside lacks meaning because it does not allow the child to be creative nor does it help in the development of the child's cognitive ability. Young children especially like it when they decide for themselves what they will draw or how they will scribble from their imagination to the surface provided. On the contrary, when the purpose for creating the art comes from the child, it becomes meaningful and they can own it by the way they express themselves and how it comes from within them.

Teacher-directed technique has its place in art also. It can be used when the child is in need of motivation and they would like to understand the way adult artists come up with their drawings. They also are important to the child when the child is in need of fresh ideas to create their own art. The teacher-directed technique is also important to the child especially when introducing new cultures and also when allowing the children to express themselves after giving them an idea of something they know but do not know how to come up with it.

## CONCLUSION

All children are born artists and child art is necessary for child development because it helps them to gain and develop cognitive, sensory, and motor skills. Through art the child expresses themselves and most importantly they gain satisfaction from the drawings they make. The best way the children can express themselves in form of art is through painting and drawing using pencils and crayons. There are five distinct development stages in child art. They are: scribbling stage, pre-schematic stage, schematic stage, realism stage and the pseudo-realistic stage. In all these stages the child develops understanding of the world surrounding them and gaining skills of how to express themselves and what they see through art.

The sex difference shows that there are depictions that the male child prefers or performs more than the girl child. The boy child finds satisfaction in portraying objects that are straight and aggressive whereas the girl child often draws images that show peace and which are round and have the shape of a heart. In terms of color, the boys chose blue and black many times compared to the girls who mostly chose red and yellow. The adults are also required in the growth of the kids through art. They have three techniques: teacher-directed technique, child-centered technique, and teacher as facilitator technique. The adult should find a clear way that will allow the child to develop their creativity but also should encourage them by giving them ideas and tasks that will boost them. In essence, child art is required for the development of the child.

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