Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences
www.pjlss.edu.pk

https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2025-23.1.00309

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Drawing the Ideal Teacher: An Art-based Exploration of Pre-Service English Teachers' Visions

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: Nov 16, 2024

Accepted: Jan 27, 2025

Keywords

Art-Based Research Drawings

Ideal Teacher

Pre-Service Teachers

Teaching English

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ABSTRACT

In educational sciences, traditional qualitative research methods often focus on utterances or behaviors to explore more insights into the phenomena. Despite the effectiveness of such methods, they also tend to fail to unpack, uncovering unuttered meanings that remain incommunicable. Art-based research is heavily anchored in the notion that art inspires people, evokes them for better expression, and awakens visions, using diverse forms of artistic expression to explore unuttered meanings. With this in mind, this study's actual raison d'être was to find alternative ways of acquiring future teachers' notions of the ideal teacher, assuming that non-traditional research methods could provide details that studies following traditional methods had not. Specifically, we sought answers to two research questions: (1) How might a close and critical analysis of the work of pre-service teachers inform us about the ideal teacher they want to be in the future? (2) How can an exploratory ABR study such as ours help us develop and enhance our understanding of the theories and practices of arts-based research? This study was conducted with twelve pre-service English teachers at a state university in Türkiye. Data were collected through participants' drawings and a focus group interview. The visual data were analyzed through criteria for drawing, whereas thematic analysis was employed for verbal data. The analysis of the drawings highlighted the teacher as an ABR object, professional and cultural identity, engaging teaching styles, positive classroom atmosphere, and holistic education as the main aspects of the ideal teacher. These themes are critical as some align with the previous research on the ideal English teacher, whereas others yielded insights that might otherwise remain unexplored in traditional data collection methods. Therefore, we proposed that arts-based research (ABR) methods provide a robust and innovative framework for eliciting nuanced and unarticulated conceptions of the ideal teacher among pre-service teachers, offering deeper insights into professional and cultural identities, pedagogical approaches and educational philosophies that may remain inaccessible through traditional qualitative methodologies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Painting is just another way of keeping a diary.

Pablo Picasso

Although it often goes unnoticed, humans do not communicate with others only by speaking or writing. We express our experiences and emotions through the objects we create and through music, dance, drawing, painting, building, and miming. We experience the world through our bodies, that is,

through our senses; hence, "We do not have bodies; we are bodies" (Snowber, 2012, p. 55). In other words, concepts and abstract entities are not products of mental processes but are, in fact, the outcomes of our bodies' relationships with their environment. Therefore, in the simplest sense, the meanings of the concepts and abstract entities in our minds are primarily constructed through concrete metaphors that use our bodies to form relationships with the external world (Yalvaç et al., 2011). Enunciating the interdisciplinary nature of bodies through social and biological constructs, Allegranti (2011) argues that human bodies are not neutral due to socio-political aspects (e.g., gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class), which shape individuals' mental, emotional, and physical selves and inform ethical values. Thus, studying the mind necessitates studying the body, for our memory is located in the senses (Snowber, 2012).

Then, how can human experience, most of which is bound to abstract thinking and individual feeling, be studied scientifically? Unlike traditional research methods that prioritize the collection and evaluation of measurable, numeric, and observable data, art-based research (ABR) closely engages in embodiment through its suggested efforts in mining out knowledge by tapping all the senses, including visual, auditory, olfactory, or other senses, which amount to the lived body. Noting that one could perfectly associate a smell with a lived experience or a piece of music with a school memory, it can easily be argued that the scientific study of the human experience should go beyond the limits of observable, numeric data to reach other forms of human expressions. Eisner (2002) underlines the relationship between the body and human consciousness, stating that the biological features of the human organism make it possible to establish contact with the environment in and through which we live.

Among many ways of knowing, visual perception is the most widely used form of constructing human experience, mainly because visual data and methodologies are the earliest representations of civilization, serving as foundational frameworks for understanding human behavior, culture, and societal structures (Tian, 2023). However, seeing depends on the eyes, without which one cannot perceive the objects in the external world, although one can sense the quantity and quality of objects by touching or hearing. Thus, regardless of using any source of sense, one fact is still true: We perceive the external reality through our senses, all of which stem from and depend on one form: the human body. In short, any research study of human experience should consider the human body as the single most crucial denominator of the study. The point is, how should we study it then?

1.1. ABR

ABR is defined as "a set of methodological tools used by researchers during any or all phases of research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation" (Leavy, 2015, p. 4) with the premise that combining creative arts' affordances with other research techniques helps obtain a more holistic account of the overall human experience. ABR is based on the premise that art inspires people, evokes them to express their emotions, awakens visions and imaginations, and transports people to other realms in verbal or non-verbal ways (Gerber et al., 2018; Thomas, 2001). Therefore, diverse alternative forms of expression, such as visual arts, literary works, digital art, performance arts, and fine arts, are considered valuable data collection tools or data itself (Leavy, 2015). The main objective of ABR is to expose a wide range of lived experiences in a lively manner (Tian, 2023). Methodologically, as Rolling (2010) underlines, ABR is characterized by its emergent and imaginative nature and often derived from an artist/researcher's practice or arts praxis inquiry models, which leads to outcomes beyond the reach of traditional scientific methods. In other words, as Gerber et al. (2018) underline, ABR has the potential to serve as the leading way to a deeper understanding of complex and multi-dimensional human conditions, moving beyond the limits of discursive communication, which entails language and negotiation and uncovering unuttered meanings.

1.2. ABR: benefits

Art serves as a "significant source of information about the social world," encompassing cultural dimensions of social life, economic and political structures, and identity issues at global, national, group, and individual levels, among many other issues (Leavy, 2020, p. 238). Tian (2023) comments that the value of ABR stems from the belief that "social reality is an open, not a closed, system: that it is dynamic, not static, and relational, not isolated" (p. 13). Although, in essence, experiencing and

verbalizing social experience is relational (Donati, 2010), components of it are not because "knowing, being, and doing are not so neatly separated" (Verlie, 2020, p.1270). Therefore, many epistemological sources may be needed to design ABR models, including sensory, emotional, perceptual, kinaesthetic, embodied, and imaginal ways of knowing (Gerber & Myers-Coffman, 2017).

Educational research has not overlooked the potential benefits of ABR (e.g., Dinham et al., 2017). Above all, through the art-based depiction of the data, researchers could spread their findings to larger audiences more easily (Chilton & Leavy, 2020). Second, integrating art-related activities could trigger more sensory data in the audience (Lapum, 2017). Third, art-related activities could dig out experiences, perceptions, or assumptions impenetrable otherwise (Nathan et al., 2022). This is specifically valid for highly sensitive, complex, and sui generis aspects of learning and teaching, such as emotions (Gerber & Myers-Coffman, 2017). Fourth, central to the present study is that ABR can allow researchers to penetrate participant groups otherwise impervious to research.

Apart from the aforementioned potential benefits, one advantage of ABR is its superiority in collecting data with participants who do not fully express themselves verbally, such as children, immigrants, or people with speech disorders. It could loosen the tongue of those unwilling to contribute to traditional research methods (Khanolainen & Semenova, 2020) in which, as Goopy and Kassan (2019) put forward, the power is placed in the hands of the researcher, which has a limiting impact mainly because traditional research methodologies do not allow the layperson to access research (Roger & Blomgren, 2019). Researchers and participants can establish a unique way of communication (Goopy & Kassan, 2019; Roger & Blomgren, 2019) that may produce extensive data through visual, auditory, or other art-based activities. From this stance, ABR gives researchers "more liberty to explore alternative reality through metaphors and embodied experiences" (p. 33).

In short, through art-based activities, researchers can bring to light the complex matrix of emotions, thoughts, or incommunicable feelings and enable researchers to shed light on these constellations of affective factors by uncovering them (Visse et al., 2019). This strength of ABR stems from psychological therapy and counseling, which enables participants to enjoy more freedom and creativity (Kara, 2015) while constructing and narrating their (educational) experiences and visions.

1.3. ABR: challenges

Like traditional research methods, ABR also faces challenges, such as its ability to elicit otherwise inaccessible thoughts and experiences, gather meaningful and authentic participant responses, and prompt articulation of personal experiences. In addition, as Lyon and Carabelli (2016) underline, the unique way of data collection may lead to data interpretation problems, and researchers may need to produce their own interpretation methods. Scherer (2016) caveats that ARB may not be suitable for some who are not competent in producing art-based materials, although establishing effective communication with participants is argued to help overcome this problem (Lyon & Carabelli, 2016). Like other qualitative research designs, issues related to credibility (or reliability) are an issue in ABR. Morris and Paris (2021) suggest that member checking is a standard method to ensure credibility, where researchers could take the data back to the participants and ask them to confirm. Birt et al. (2016) suggest that member checking can be conducted on synthesized data so that the participants can more efficiently and accurately comment on emerging themes while providing more meaningful feedback or checking. Lastly, it is common to dichotomize the art and science continuum, with some researchers underlining the science end while others emphasizing the art end. While those who lean more towards the science end of the continuum voice the claim that ABR should be integrated into other data collection and analysis methods, others who lean towards the art end prioritize art-based activities as the primary data and data analysis source. However, Tian (2023) suggested that this dichotomy is not valid, assuming that ABR taps into the affective aspects of participants; thus, its focus remains in the shaded area of the human psyche that is difficult to measure.

1.4. Using visuals

Visualization is a unique aspect of our thinking and memory. Holm (2020) underscores that cultures have been increasingly visualized through both traditional modes (e.g., television, newspapers, magazines) and digital tools (e.g., smartphones and social media). Visual images have the potential

to embody a massive number of emotional stimuli, most of which could be recorded in the subconscious. Hence, visual arts research (VAR) incites people to stir, trigger, and express their implicit and explicit experience of the body or the lived body. It is a means to think differently and diverge from the beaten track. The reason is the 'defamiliarization' effect through which people could approach experiences, beliefs, or attitudes from a different perspective, which significantly benefits social scientists, according to Leavy (2020). Since language learning and teaching are ridden with a wide range of emotions, beliefs, or attitudes, it is hypothesized that VAR has excellent potential for researchers in exploring the emotional aspects of second or foreign language learning as researchers can collect participants' first-hand experiences by using their own abstract experiences and concrete products. Researchers could also ask heritage language speakers to express their acculturation process through visuals. In VAR, data could be obtained through researcher-generated art, participant-generated art, or a combination. The use of visuals could also integrate those who find it hard to communicate their ideas verbally or those who cannot express themselves verbally due to disability, lack of proficiency in language, or some other related reasons. Needless to say, using visuals and other sensory cues can tap into issues related to creativity. Although creativity is often associated with a systematic interplay between individuals and their sociocultural environment (Zamana, 2022), existing models often fail to comprehensively portray the interplay between all aspects of the creative process (Vuichard et al., 2023).

Several possible ramifications of VAR include collage, art journaling, and photography. A collage involves selecting, cutting, and pasting together visuals from newspapers, magazines, or Internet sources. Collages are sound for bringing together several aspects of the phenomenon and allowing people to think differently (Scotti & Chilton, 2018). Collage enables the participation of different subjects in the research process, even those overlooked due to old age, disability, or language barriers (Leavy, 2020). Second, photographs could count as significant elements for VAR. The rise of digital technologies has enabled people to take many photographs. Researchers could take advantage of photos to order events, obtain valuable data, or access otherwise impossible marginalized groups (Holm, 2020). Several authors suggested using photographic surveys to explore how people or things change over time (Holm, 2020). Third, in art journaling, the participants must build visual journals comprising text or images like magazine visuals or drawings (Chilton & Leavy, 2020). The researchers are flexible in what instructions to give, ranging from very strict to highly flexible.

Previous research on using visuals in teacher education has revealed valuable insights in that they are useful tools in probing participants' knowledge, inner worlds, or expectations from the education process (Briell et al., 2017; Dinham et al., 2017; Stevens & Elen, 2024). Katz et al. (2011) investigated pre-service primary teachers' professional identity development by analyzing their drawings about how they would teach science, and their findings showed that drawings were an informative way to reveal their thinking. Dinham et al. (2017) investigated pre-service teachers' perceptions of their future resilience profiles using drawings, and their findings indicated that drawings were effective ways of meaning-making and communication, which can yield insights that cannot be extracted from textual or verbal sources. In another study, Wendy et al. (2016) explored novice teachers' perceptions of research to understand how they conceptualized the research process. The researchers commented that using pictures could get the participants' hidden beliefs more holistically. They referred to drawings in focus group interviews as idea-generation triggers, assuming that teachers do not always easily verbalize their thoughts. They commented that drawings enabled them to mine out valuable data. Recent research also showed that pre-service teachers' drawings as research data portrayed new and individual elements (Stevens & Elen, 2024), provided room for reflecting experiences, beliefs, and emotions through non-arbitrary signs (Ahn, 2021), and increased the credibility of the research through member checking (Morris & Paris, 2021).

1.5. The image of the ideal teacher

This study does not define and conceptualize the "ideal" teacher as "perfect," "flawless," or "best," considering Morrison's (2009) caveat that regarding ideals as the symbols of perfection potentially lead to efforts to seek flawlessness that may end in the sense of failure. As Gerth and Wright (2009) underline, either complex or simple, social actions have idealized versions reflecting expectations that are socially and culturally constructed and mediated. Besides, ideals are also imaginary (Wong & Chiu, 2020) and thus reflect imagined identities that are part of the identity and "is not yet realized,

but which the person would like to achieve in the future" (De Ruyter & Conroy, 2002, p. 510). Therefore, creating ideals is a critical part of the identity development process (Lawler, 2014; Wong & Chiu, 2020). Within the scope of this study, the ideal teacher is used synonymously with the effective teacher mainly because the previous research does not fully provide clear demarcation lines between effective teacher and ideal teacher. While pre-service teachers idealize their current and future teaching practices, or students express their opinions about the ideal teachers, they often center their ideals around effective teaching. It should be noted that an "effective teacher" is theoretical, whereas a "good teacher" is practical. That is to say, one can encounter many good teachers who follow effective teaching methods, yet it is hard to find a single teacher who incorporates all the qualities of an effective teacher.

National literature provides insights into the ideal English teacher from learners' and pre-service teachers' perspectives. Çelik et al. (2013) found that learners valued effective teaching of language skills, personal qualities like fairness and enthusiasm, and classroom behaviors such as reducing anxiety. Similarly, Hişmanoğlu (2019) emphasized learners' preferences for teachers with strong English proficiency, particularly in speaking, using appropriate methods, and being lively and encouraging. Both studies underlined that qualities like sex, age, and appearance were the least important. Külekçi's (2018) study also showed that pre-service teachers highly emphasized real-life examples, effective communication, well-preparation for classes, ongoing professional development, and using appropriate materials, which are the qualities of the ideal teacher. Additionally, the least important qualities were the teacher's appearance, authority, and making the class enjoyable. Rezalou (2024) highlighted key qualities of communication skills, method selection, English mastery, student rapport, and fairness in assessment.

International research on the ideal teacher also revealed similar results. Bell's (2005) study showed critical characteristics of the ideal teacher, including interaction with native speakers, familiarity with language teaching theories, using different instructional methods, and reducing learners' anxiety. Williams and Burden (2007) focused on the affective factors and emphasized the importance of creating a relaxed atmosphere, maintaining control, presenting content creatively, keeping learners engaged, and building rapport. Brown (2009) stated that cultural knowledge, immediate error correction, and engaging activities are essential qualities. Similarly, Barnes and Lock (2013) found that enthusiasm, clear explanations, and robust content knowledge were critical indicators of an ideal teacher. Ahn and West (2018) underscored the significance of rapport, emphasizing accessibility and approachability. Tarajová and Metruk (2020) identified being active, using diverse teaching methods, catering to students' needs, knowing students well, and maintaining positive relationships as essential traits. Lastly, Bogale and Wale (2024) highlighted content and pedagogical knowledge, including effective materials use and rapport building, while noting that socio-affective skills like understanding motivation and individual differences were less emphasized.

1.6. The present study

The study's actual *raison d'être* was to find alternative ways of acquiring future teachers' notions of the ideal teacher, assuming that non-traditional research methods could provide details that studies following traditional methods had not. Thus, the major hypothesis of the study was that "using an alternative research methodology" brings different results on the issue. Having summarized the related work on ABR, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. How might a close and critical analysis of the work of pre-service teachers inform us about the ideal teacher they want to be in the future?
2. How can an exploratory ABR study such as ours help us develop and enhance our understanding of the theories and practices of arts-based research?

However, these questions were not rigid. Similar to other forms of qualitative research studies and ABR, a/r/tographic inquiry emphasizes "the process of inquiry and therefore questions evolve," unlike "traditional forms of research" that "formulate specific questions to be answered" (Irwin et al., 2006, p. 75).

2.1. METHODS

2.2. A/r/tography

ABR encompasses several potential designs, including visual arts, fiction, non-fiction, and music, among many others. The present ABR study employed a/r/tography as its framing research design. In Leavy's (2012) words, "A/r/tography is a metaphor for our simultaneous, overlapping, and mutually informing artist-researcher-teacher identities" (p. 7). In line with this, as Irwin (2013) underlines, "theorizing rather than theory, and practicing rather than practice" shifts the purpose of these concepts from stable and abstract systems to more dynamic processes in which exchange, reflexivity, and relationality are in the form of a constant movement (p. 199). Therefore, from a methodological perspective, a/r/tography amalgamates images and text without prioritizing one over the other, intending to delineate or generate new meanings and imaginings (Leavy, 2012). Metaphorically speaking, such research depends on rhizomes (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and maps, both referring to the fact that, like anything else, research is "always becoming" by making innumerable connections (Irwin et al., 2006, p. 71). Each connection entails cognitive, emotional, verbal, and bodily sub-connections from this perspective. However, recent research has already accepted that seemingly abstract mental processes, such as emotional reasoning, "the skill with which individuals utilize emotions in reasoning and decision-making," are genuinely interconnected (Palmer et al., 2008, p. 33). Thus, by using a/r/tography, evolving emotional and mental processes can be acquired as long as researchers collaborate with their participants successfully. In this study, as researchers, we worked with the teachers by responding to their drawings, focusing on what these images brought to our minds as former language learners and prospective and in-service teachers, and finally, as researchers.

2.3. Participants

This study was carried out at a state university in northwestern Türkiye. Twelve third-year (junior-level) university students (nine females and three males) enrolled in the English Language and Literature BA program voluntarily participated in the study. Participants were selected from a broader cohort of one hundred third-year students enrolled in the Research Methods course. As part of the course, students were required to work in groups and prepare a project related to one of the research methods. Participants of this study were the students who chose ABR as their project topic. Each participant expressed a commitment to pursue a teaching career upon graduation and was enrolled in the English language teaching certificate program at the same university. In addition, they successfully completed the second-year course, Teaching of Language Skills, and maintained a GPA (grade point average) above 2.85. All participants consented to the study, and strict measures were taken to ensure data anonymity.

2.4. Data collection

Participants were asked to visually express what kind of teacher they envisioned themselves becoming or aspired to be through drawing a picture. They were not provided with any pre-determined instructions or guidelines so as not to influence their drawings. They were given one week to ponder and design what to draw and one week to complete their drawings about their prospective teacher identities. After they had completed their drawings, they were also given another week to write a description for their drawings. The participants were also requested to write descriptions of their drawings to ensure a more precise and personal evaluation of their work, without which misinterpretations would occur (Rose, 2012). They were asked to write about what they drew and why.

All participants were allowed to ask questions about the planning and drawings during the drawing process. However, we, the researchers, refrained from any technical or thematic remarks that might affect their drawings. Our role was primarily to encourage and motivate them to do their best to portray their prospective teacher identities. Some participants finalized their drawings after drawing two or three drafts, yet only the final versions were considered during the data analysis process. In addition, some participants complained about the quality of their drawings and expressed that they did not have any talent for drawing and thus could not fully reflect the composition in their minds. At this juncture, it should be underlined that the deployment of drawings in the present study implies

that they are treated as dialogic means of revealing information and that not all information can be revealed through verbal narratives. From this standpoint, participants were regarded as non-artists, and the aesthetic value of their drawings was disregarded, considering the focus of this study. Since participants were engaged in creating artwork, they were expected to produce a visual text resulting from a creative process to which "cognitive, conative, emotional and environmental factors are central" (Vuichard et al., 2023, p. 1). Additionally, from the perspective of ABR in education, if a work effectively conveys a message initiating action and change, regardless of the debates about what art is and what makes it good, then "something about the art itself works" (McDermott, 2010, p. 8). In addition to drawings, a focus group interview was conducted with the participants to elaborate on and verify certain aspects of their drawings (see Appendix for focus group interview questions).

2.5. The data analysis

The visual data were analyzed by adapting Ahn's (2018) criteria for drawing examination (see Table 1), which is based on social semiotic multimodal analysis (Kress, 2010). These criteria focus on non-arbitrary semiotic signs involving aspects such as a character's salience, posture, appearance, and relational dynamics (e.g., proximity, eye contact etc.) between the character and other figures or objects, where applicable. Given the uniqueness of the artwork and the purpose of this study, some changes were also made, and new criteria were generated while employing these criteria. The verbal data obtained from focus group interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach deemed suitable for this type of data analysis (Fugard & Potts, 2019). No pre-determined themes or codes were used while analyzing the verbal data; therefore, an inductive approach was employed to identify the recurring threads in the data. In line with this, Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-stage thematic analysis procedure (i.e., familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and reporting) was followed. Lastly, visual and verbal data analyses were merged. Fugard and Potts (2019) underline that two independent coders must find the same theme within the data for reliable theme identification. Therefore, data accuracy was aimed at being attained as the drawings and descriptions were exposed to multiple readings by two researchers who independently coded the data. Intercoder reliability was found to be 90% through Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula (Reliability=the number of agreements / the number of agreements + disagreement). The third researcher's evaluation helped finalize the coding of the conflicting data evaluations (see Appendix A for pre-service teachers' drawings and Appendix B for a sample analysis).

Table 1: Visual content analysis framework

Setting (General Composition)
• Physical setting (e.g., realistic or symbolic, objects if there are any)
• Time or temporal features (e.g., day or night, past, present or future, seasons etc.)
• Use of colors (e.g., black and white, vivid colors, pastel colors etc.)
• Linework/visual style (e.g., stick figure, schematic drawing, contour drawing etc.)
• Mood or atmosphere (e.g., joyful, boring, energetic etc.)
Main Character
• Physical appearance o Human or non-human o Body depiction (e.g., partial or full) o Gender o Attire (e.g., formal, casual, cultural, modern, ethnic etc.) o Age (e.g., old or young, mid-age etc.)
• Eye contact (e.g., with the audience or other characters etc.)
• Action (e.g., teaching, leading an activity, demonstrating something etc.)
• Posture (e.g., standing, sitting etc.)
Other characters
• Physical appearance o Human or non-human o Body depiction (e.g., partial or full) o Gender o Attire (e.g., formal, casual, cultural, modern, ethnic etc.)) o Age (e.g., old or young, mid-age, children etc.)

• Action (if any)
• Eye contact (e.g., with the audience, other characters, main character, etc.)
• Positions (e.g., above or below; foreground or background)
• Posture (e.g., standing, sitting etc.)
• Proximity (to the main character)
Embedded texts
• Idea bubbles or speech balloon
• Other written expressions (e.g., posters, signposts, etc.)

Authors' own design. Adapted from Ahn (2018)

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Teacher as an ABR object

As a theme, the teacher as an ABR object constitutes how participants conceptualize the ideal teacher primarily with their physical presence (e.g., body typologies, appearance, sex, etc.). Findings revealed that 7 out of 12 drawings (Pictures A, B, F, H, I, J, and K) portrayed the ideal teacher in the classroom (realistic setting). In contrast, in 5 drawings (Pictures C, D, E, G, and L), they are situated in symbolic settings. In line with this, in 10 out of 12 drawings (Pictures A, B, C, D, F, H, I, J, K, and L), they were depicted realistically regardless of the symbolic and realistic nature of the general compositions of the drawings. In 2 drawings (Pictures E and G), the teacher was portrayed symbolically as a natural phenomenon (a tree or the sun). A stick figure represented the ideal teacher in 2 drawings (Pictures H and J). The ideal teacher image is depicted as a female figure in 8 out of 12 drawings (Pictures A, C, D, F, I, J, K, and L). In contrast, in 3 drawings (Pictures E, G, and H), the teacher's sex is unclear, while in only one drawing, the teacher is depicted as male (Picture B). Lastly, apart from Pictures A and G, most drawings portray the teacher smilingly.

3.2. Professional and cultural identity

In many of the drawings, an emphasis is also placed on the teacher's attire, creating a demeanor of professionalism and authority in the classroom. This emphasis is strongly showcased in some pictures through specific details and colors. Participants mainly portrayed the ideal teacher in formal dress, yet some drawings provided vivid details, such as the male teacher's bottomed-up jacket and plain black tie (Picture B) and the teacher's red dress and high heels (Picture F). Although depicted in a highly symbolic way, the formal attire is also placed in Picture H through a shirt integrated into the upper half of the tree trunk. Additionally, visual and written cues exemplify the importance of teacher's professional preparations (Pictures A and I). While Student A claims that he "drew this picture to express the importance of preparing for the course while teaching English," Student I further notes that "using well-organized and practical visual materials enhances [his] students' learning."

Participants viewed the ideal teacher as one who was well-presented and respected. These details suggest that the teacher's identity is deeply intertwined with their profession. Participants' drawings also provide various cultural references, such as the vivid depiction of a female English teacher with an Islamic headscarf, indicating the participants' intention to maintain their cultural (religious) values in a professional setting (Pictures A and I). Similarly, the Turkish flag (Picture A) and a reference to "Nutuk" (The Great Speech) by Atatürk also emphasize mainstream national values that should be possessed by the ideal teacher (Picture L). Furthermore, the written expressions "my worldview, my thoughts, my experiences" in the form of sunlight (Picture E) exemplify participants' insistence on their cultural identity, which is inseparable from their professional one. Student E speaks of herself as the ideal teacher by stating:

> The sun represents me. I radiate my worldview, thoughts, and life experiences to enlighten my students.

3.3. Engaging teaching style

Participants' drawings also revealed the pedagogical and instructional qualities they associated with the ideal teacher. Findings indicated a bifurcation in how these qualities are portrayed in the drawings. Drawings depicting the ideal teacher in the classroom provide details about teaching styles

and highly emphasize pedagogical elements that facilitate and value interactive and engaging teaching styles. The teacher employs interactive and visually engaging methods by standing in front of the whiteboard and holding an umbrella to make learning more vivid, contextual, and tangible and thus more meaningful (Picture A). From another corner, positioning students around the teacher indicates a teaching style that values active participation and teamwork (Picture B). In others, the focus on interactive and engaging teaching styles is similarly highlighted (Pictures H, I, and J). In all these drawings, the teacher is shown standing in front of the whiteboard, asking questions or giving instructions, such as "Who wants to provide an example?" (Picture H) and "Please discuss" (Picture J). Written expressions such as "good communication skills" and "discuss in respect" (Picture I) and the words and expressions "perfect" and "you are so active today" (Picture J) signal a highly engaging, reciprocal classroom activity. References to such engaging teaching styles can also be found in the focus group interviews. For Student H, all parties in the classroom should be "active" throughout the day:

> I didn't want my teaching to be boring and ordinary. When I become a teacher, my class will look exactly like the one in my drawing. By guiding my students, I hope to create an environment that will allow my students to be active.

For Student J, likewise, active engagement is key to ideal teaching:

> When I become a teacher, I prefer to engage my students to interact with each other more actively. They will be using various additional resources and interacting with each other in English.

3.4. Positive classroom atmosphere

Drawings representing the teacher in the classroom further provide insights into a positive classroom atmosphere. Participants' drawings show a yearning for a positive classroom atmosphere, despite one drawing that differs from the others (Picture F) in that the students remain seated, silent, and inactive with their coursebooks on their desks. Apart from this, other drawings reflect a positive classroom atmosphere in different ways. In Picture A, the written expressions show the mutual love between students and the teacher. The ideal teacher fosters a respectful classroom atmosphere, instilling positive attitudes toward learning English. Pictures B, F, and K also strongly emphasize a good rapport with students and a positive classroom atmosphere. The word "family" in this picture refers to the desire to create a supportive and nurturing environment. Also, "inspiration" highlights the desire to promote creativity and encourage students to do their best. Picture K adds another dimension and associates academic growth and development with a process incorporating different aspects through the image of a staircase, the steps of which are labeled "mistakes," "hard work," "fail," "learn," and "success." Accordingly, providing students with guidance and encouragement against difficulties and failures is strongly highlighted as a sub-theme as the teacher and students standing hand-in-hand highlights such positive relationships. The strong emphasis on showing the teacher and students hand-in-hand also highlights positive relationships with students and creates a safe, collaborative learning environment. For Student K, as she states in the interviews, "the ideal teacher finds innovative ways of teaching and makes students feel safe in the classroom so they don't hesitate to ask questions and speak." Thus, rather than a highly disciplined and teacher-centered classroom, participants equate the ideal teacher with a reciprocal instructional activity, as echoed in Student L's interview:

> Another thing I want to underline is the balance in the give-and-take between students and teachers for positive classroom and effective learning.

3.5. Holistic education

Participants' drawings bring the principles of holistic education into the researchers' minds. Interestingly, these representations frequently employ these agents among various natural phenomena. The ideal teacher is a gardener holding a watering can, with water drops falling onto students as flowers sprouting from their heads (Picture D). Such imagery conveys that the teacher should nurture and help students grow academically, emotionally, and personally. Colorful flowers sprouting from the students' heads also imply the teacher's awareness of student's differences. Teachers and students further water the flowers, growing and learning collaboratively (Picture L).

The words inscribed, such as love, care, and curiosity, suggest a positive teacher-student relationship, signaling the affective dimension of holistic education. The ideal teacher is also drawn as a tree, standing for a source of growth in wisdom (Picture G). The words (e.g., confidence, respect, love, kindness, communication, etc.) placed among the branches and leaves signal a positive teacher-student relationship that can be attained through holistic education. In Student G's words:

> The branches along the tree represent the values that the teacher and the student should equally share. These values are fundamental for students' academic development and personal growth.

Picture E draws the ideal teacher with a cycle representing students' academic and personal growth and the sun representing the teacher, emphasizing the significance of the teacher's existence as the nurturer. Accordingly, in addition to teaching language skills, the ideal English teacher serves as a moral and emotional role model for students, imbuing students with values like compassion and respect for others. When it comes to Picture C, the burning candle symbolizes enlightenment and guidance, suggesting that teaching is not confined to the classroom environment; it also involves instilling students with core values. The hearts around the candle flame refer to the teacher's and students' emotional connection.

4. DISCUSSION

This study focused on pre-service teachers' professional ideals and aspirations instead of their lived experiences employing ABR. Avoiding the debates about what art is and is not, the drawings showed that pre-service teachers underwent a creative process for effectively conveying their ideals (McDermott, 2010) by visualizing their imaginations (Gerber & Myers-Coffman, 2017). The analysis of the drawings highlighted the teacher as an ABR object, professional and cultural identity, engaging teaching styles, positive classroom atmosphere, and holistic education as the main aspects of the ideal teacher. These aspects are critical as some align with the previous research on the ideal English teacher, whereas others yielded insights that might otherwise remain unexplored in traditional data collection methods (Nathan et al., 2022; Visse et al., 2019). From this standpoint, in this study, ABR emerged as a practical method that allows the researcher to collect data about complex cognitive and mental constructs remaining in the shaded area of the human psyche (Tian, 2023). Therefore, the overall results of this study align with the previous research on ABR in which participants' inner worlds or expectations were revealed (Briell et al., 2017; Dinham et al., 2017; Stevens & Elen, 2024).

As for the image of the ideal teacher, pre-service teachers focused on and emphasized the aspects of the effective teacher rather than making efforts for perfection. In addition, the drawings also showed they prioritized the outward characteristics of the teacher, such as smiling faces, formal attire, and the teacher's physical presence in the classroom with students. The details in the drawings indicate that pre-service teachers attach great importance to visualizing professionalism along with emotional approachability. Besides, the predominance of female representation while depicting the ideal teacher may stem from the number of female participants. However, it also reflects the cultural perspective in the Turkish context, where nurturing and caregiving are mainly associated with women. Thus, it may indicate the persistence of gendered stereotypes in teaching. All these findings about the teacher's appearance and sex in the drawings are critical because they do not align with the results of previous research, which indicated that the ideal teacher's qualities like sex and appearance were least important (Çelik et al., 2013; Hişmanoğlu, 2019; Külekçi, 2018). In line with these, the existence of other national and religious values in the drawings also shows that cultural, social, and emotional factors tacitly shape the pre-service teachers' ideals (Vuichard et al., 2023), and thus their drawings can serve as critical sources of information about social reality (Leavy, 2020; Panova et al., 2024). Given that choice of attire is a way of expressing personal, professional, and social identity (Weber & Mitchell, 2003), how the ideal teacher is portrayed in these drawings also shows pre-service teachers' conscious or unconscious conformity with the social and professional norms.

Regarding effective teaching styles, findings indicate a strong emphasis on engaging teaching styles that make the teacher and students active in the classroom, and in almost all such drawings, speaking is highly underscored. These findings concur with the results of previous research showing that keeping learners engaged (Tarajová & Metruk, 2020; Williams & Burden, 2007) and effective

teaching of language skills, particularly speaking (Çelik et al., 2013; Hişmanoğlu, 2019) are among the critical descriptors of the ideal English teacher. Since traditional language teaching methods are still followed in Turkey, focusing on an engaging teaching style is critical. Unlike the common belief that schooling experiences in childhood play a critical role in shaping the teacher's professional identity, this finding indicated the value of student-centered approaches to teaching, to which the pre-service teachers were exposed during their teacher education (Weber & Mitchell, 2003). Therefore, this finding also underlines the importance of teacher education in shaping pre-service teachers' professional identity and teaching practices. The co-occurrences of engaging teaching style with emphasis on a positive classroom atmosphere also underpin this statement since interactive and engaging language teaching, particularly prioritizing speaking activities such as discussion, entails enthusiasm, motivation, and reduced anxiety. In a similar vein, previous studies also underline that a relaxed atmosphere, building rapport (Ahn & West, 2018; Bogale & Wale, 2024; Rezalou, 2024; Williams & Burden, 2007) and reduced anxiety (Bell, 2005; Çelik et al., 2013) are associated with the ideal language teacher.

Lastly, findings revealed that drawings picturing the ideal teacher through highly symbolic ways featured holistic education. These drawings underline the significance of affective factors in academic development and personal growth with a frequent association between teaching and nature. This finding is critical because previous research often indicated indirect associations between the ideal teacher and holistic education, yet pre-service teachers' drawings revealed strong links between these two concepts. Therefore, it can be said that pre-service teachers' aspirations move beyond only teaching English and incorporate educating their students for their future lives. In terms of ABR, this finding is also critical as it shows that drawing the ideal teacher gave pre-service teachers more leeway to express their own visions (Kara, 2015; Tian, 2023) in their own unique way (Gerber & Myers-Coffman, 2017; Goopy & Kassan, 2019; Roger & Blomgren, 2019).

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the pre-service teachers' notions of the ideal English teacher by employing ABR to bring deeper and unique insights into these issues. Although some of our findings concur with the previous research, some diverged from the existing literature. This study suggests implications for teacher education and ABR that align with our findings. First, teacher education programs should imbue pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate the premises of holistic education into their teaching practices. Second, the low aesthetic quality of the drawings characterized by stick figures on colorless spaces necessitates taking arts education seriously. In line with this, pre-service teachers should be introduced to theories and practical applications of ABR during their teaching education so that they can integrate art into their teaching practices and employ ABR for their practical purposes (e.g., understanding their own students' expectations, attitudes, aspirations etc. about language learning). This need becomes even more pressing considering that our participants will work as English language teachers, and most of them will work with young learners by coloring, drawing, painting, and developing hand-made materials such as masks for classroom use. Our study's findings may guide other practitioners, researchers, and educators in integrating or adapting similar methods. However, it should be noted that our results emerged from twelve pre-service teachers' drawings and self-reports, and thus, generalizing these findings is difficult. In addition, as findings are primarily based on drawings, the unique nature of ABR should also be considered. Further studies may focus on applying Freudian, Lacanian, or Jungian analyses to the drawings. Also, there is a pressing need for empirical studies investigating new ways to integrate ABR into teacher education and English language teaching.

Ethical declarations: The study was conducted with the approval of the Ethics Committee of Karabuk University (protocol code: E-78977401-050.04-389596, date of approval: 15.11.2024), and a consent form was obtained from each participant.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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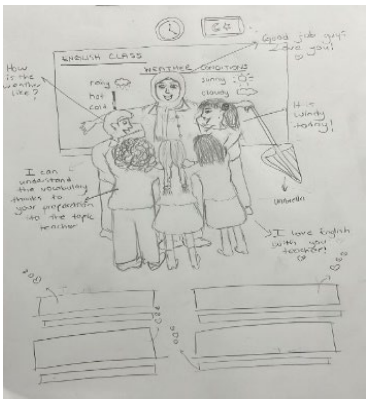
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APPENDIX

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Can you please describe and explain your drawing to us?
2. What meanings did you plan to convey while drawing the ideal teacher?
3. How does your drawing represent your vision of the ideal teacher?
4. What aspects of your drawing best capture the qualities of an ideal teacher?
5. What difficulties did you encounter while drawing the ideal teacher?

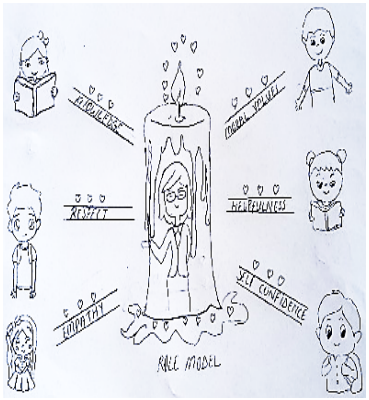
Appendix A. Pre-service Teachers' Drawings



Picture A



Picture B



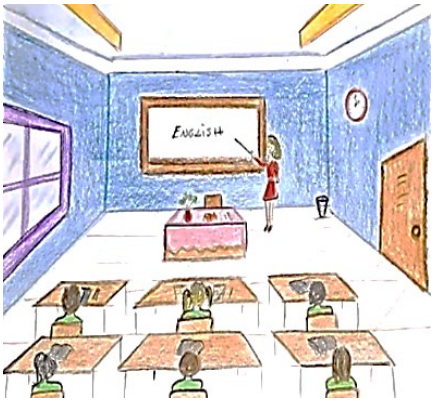
Picture C



Picture D



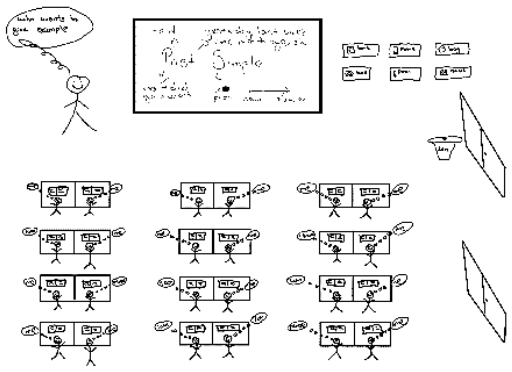
Picture E



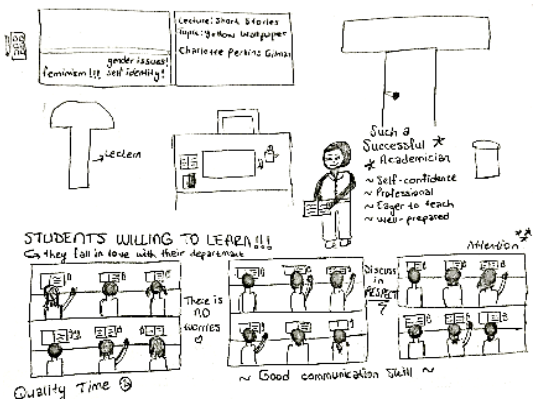
Picture F



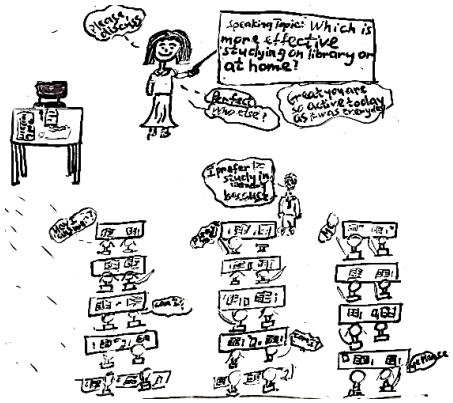
Picture G



Picture H



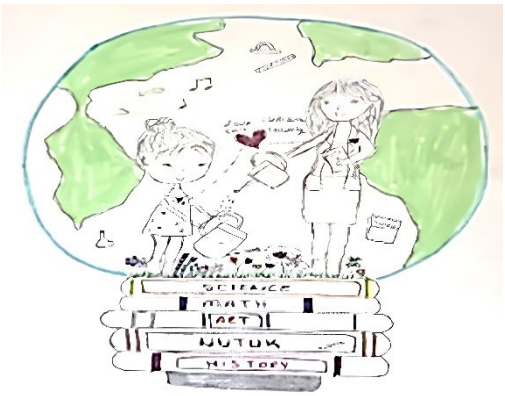
Picture I



Picture J



Picture K



Picture L

Appendix B. Sample Application of the Criteria for Student A–Picture A

Setting: Classroom
• **Physical setting:** Realistic setting; classroom; there is a clock and a whiteboard on the wall along with a Turkish flag. There are also six student desks in the classroom.
• **Time or temporal features**: The time is unidentified. However, it seems the drawing reflects a regular day in a classroom/school.
• **Use of colors:** Pencil drawing without colors.
• **Linework/visual style:** Sketches
• **Mood or atmosphere:** Joyful, energetic, and engaging classroom atmosphere
Main Character: The Teacher
• Physical appearance o **Human or non-human:** Human o **Body depiction:** full body description o **Gender:** Female o **Attire:** formal attire (a jacket and a shirt) with an Islamic scarf o **Age:** Mid-age (over 30s)
• **Eye contact:** With the audience
• **Action:** The teacher appears to be conducting a language-teaching activity in the classroom, actively facilitating the session. Based on the spatial arrangement and interactions between the teacher and the students, the activity is engaging and promotes active student participation. Also, the teacher holds an umbrella, which is thematically related to the topic studied during class time. Therefore, she seems to lead the activity and provides guidance or help when needed.
• **Posture: S**tanding in front of the whiteboard and holding an umbrella. She opens her arms just like she hugs her students.
Other characters
• Physical appearance o **Human or non-human:** Five students. All human o **Body depiction:** All students are drawn full body. o **Gender:** Four girls and a boy o **Attire**: Formal; school uniform o **Age:** Not precise. Presumably, around 10-year-old students.
• **Action:** The students stand around the teacher. They surround her and show their love for her.
• **Eye contact:** No eye contact with the audience. But they are gazing at the teacher.
• **Positions:** They are standing around the teacher. They are below the teacher due to the height difference but are positioned in the foreground. Due to their positions, one student is depicted in the right-profile view, one from the left-profile view, and three from the rear perspective.
• **Posture:** Standing joyfully.
• **Proximity:** They are positioned very close to the teacher.
Embedded texts
• **Idea bubbles or speech balloons**: The teacher says, " Good job guys! Love you." A male student asks what the weather is like. The female student next to the male student says, "I can understand the vocabulary thanks to your preparation for the topic, teacher." A female student on the left-hand side of the teacher says, "It is windy today!" Another female student says, "I love English with you, teacher."
• **Other written expressions:** There are some written expressions on the whiteboard. On the top left corner of the whiteboard, "English Class" is written. Below this title is written, weather conditions," along with some key vocabulary such as "rainy, hot, cold, sunny, cloudy." There are also drawings of clouds, rain clouds, and sun.

Authors own design. Adapted from Ahn (2018)