



The effect of visual art education on nine to ten year old children's appreciation criteria

Elif Sami ^a

^aIstanbul University – Cerrahpasa, Institute of Graduate Studies, İstanbul, Türkiye.

ABSTRACT

Education to gain the ability to evaluate works of art will strengthen the child's ability to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly and will lead to the proliferation of individuals with a developed aesthetic consciousness in society. This is an important quality that cannot be sacrificed in the construction of the desired society in the future. In this study, it was aimed to investigate the effects of art education given in primary school Visual Arts course on children's appreciation criteria. For this purpose, art education was applied in the visual arts course of fourth grade students consisting of nineteen female and eighteen male students within the programme created for five weeks and its effects were tried to be determined by the observation method within the scope of qualitative research methods. Firstly, an interview was conducted in order to learn the students' taste criteria, and in this direction, the topics selected for the five-week education were determined by examining the fourth-grade achievements of the Visual Arts Programme. Then, lesson plan and slides related to the subject were prepared. Students were observed during the applications and finally a final interview was conducted to examine the changes in tastes and all the data obtained were analysed. In line with the findings obtained, it was revealed that the students rapidly adopted educational art criticism as a result of the art education related to the programmes given to the fourth-grade primary school students.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 15 September 2025; Accepted 1 October 2025

KEYWORDS visual arts course; appreciation; criterion; primary school students; fourth-grade

Introduction

In the context of our study, 'liking' is defined as the emotional response that leads to the judgement of beauty or ugliness in any subject. 'Criterion' is defined as the principle or standard used to make a judgement or assign value. These definitions, based on the TDK (2019), form the theoretical framework for our research.

What is liking? Is it subjective or objective? What is the relationship between art and sensitivity? These are questions whose answers have been and are being sought in the philosophy of art. Beauty can be seen in the works produced by humans or in nature itself. It can be argued that beauty in art is the beauty that emerges later as a result of human creativity through the use of some techniques of beauty in nature. A work of art is expected to have aesthetic concern, originality and individuality, a pleasing order, and features such as proportion, symmetry, and integrity (Doğu, 2018).

Works of art contain traces, understandings, intuitions, definitions, and narratives of the time they belong to. People who can enjoy a work of art can interpret these traces and expand their worlds of feeling, reason, intuition, and their horizons of thought to reach beyond the ages. For these purposes, when sensitivity to a person is desired, it is necessary to provide art education. As one's senses are trained, one's awareness will increase. We will have more substantial reasons to trust that those with the competence to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly will prefer the beautiful in their behaviour and what others offer.

The students in the research group attending the fourth grade of primary school are in a stage called the Realism

CONTACT Elif Sami  elifsami.phd@gmail.com  Istanbul University – Cerrahpasa, Institute of Graduate Studies

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by The Primary Education Journal

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which allows for immediate free access to the work and permits any user to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the full texts of articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software or use them for any other lawful purpose even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited.



Period (9-12 years old) regarding the developmental stages of children's painting. When the characteristics of children at this stage are examined, they approach painting with a realistic understanding; they establish proportions between body parts in their figures; there are differences in the paintings of girls and boys; they begin to choose colours that are appropriate to reality; they are concerned about conforming to some tastes and measurements of the culture and society they live in; and they begin to follow the rules in terms of the relationship and arrangement between the figure and other elements (Yavuzer, 1998; MEB, 2001; Savaş, 2014).

Critics, who can be claimed to have the power to shape the art world with their criteria of appreciation, are expected not to be prejudiced but to have artistic experience, technical knowledge, and general culture; to be sensitive, to have broad horizons; and to be rational and fair. Practising these characteristics during the comments in class and expressing them as a general culture will ensure that students are at least aware of these concepts. Regarding the importance of criticism in the classroom, it can be said that it facilitates understanding, provides pleasure, is a means of getting to know the student, prepares the ground for new ideas, increases the rate of participation in the lesson, supports tolerance, breaks prejudice, encourages objectivity, encourages group activity, increases artistic culture, teaches to look at the work, develops thinking ability, and establishes a positive-negative balance. Suppose the criteria for students' appreciation of their own and their friends' work or the criteria for criticism are determined in a random, unsystematic way. In that case, it can only be considered a remote possibility that they will be able to fulfil the above functions. Students, like people who need to learn the technique in any other job, need guidance in the specific subject. The following are the stages of criticism that should be followed (Ayaydin et al., 2018):

1. Description: Saying what is seen by looking at the work
2. Analysing: Explaining how the artist uses art elements and design principles
3. Interpretation: Making personal interpretations that may vary according to the students' knowledge
4. Judgment: Reaching a judgement about whether the work is a success or not with the data obtained from the previous stages

Table 1. Sample Educational Art Criticism Questions (Ayaydin et al., 2018)

<u>Description</u>
Which art form is this? (painting, ceramics, sculpture, photography, etc.)
What do you see in this artefact?
What is going on in the artefact?
Are there any figures in work?
How many figures?
What are the figures doing?
<u>Analysing</u>
How are the colours arranged? (dark-light, cold-warm, main-intermediate)
Which lines do you see? (straight, curved, broken)
What shapes do you see? (geometric, organic)
Which tissue is there? (Soft, hard, etc.)
How is the front-back relationship created in objects?
Are there contrasts? How are they constructed?
Are there repeating shapes?
Which technique could the artist have used for this painting?
Where is the emphasis? How is it composed?
<u>Interpretation</u>
What do you think this work is about?
What does the colours here make you feel?

How would you feel if you touched it?

What kind of sound do you hear?

What do you smell?

What do you taste?

Are there symbols? If so, what might they mean?

At that time, what could the artist have conveyed in this work?

What does this painting tell the people of that period?

Judgement

Do you like this work, and why?

Which art theory do you think this work belongs to?

In This Study

This study holds significant implications for the field of art education. It aimed to determine the changes in the taste criteria before and after five weeks of training given to children attending the fourth grade of primary school in a visual art lesson. The findings provide valuable insights into the transformative effects of art education on children's appreciation criteria, underscoring the importance of early exposure to art in shaping aesthetic consciousness. These insights will undoubtedly inform and enlighten educators and policymakers in the field of art education.

Method and Data Analysis

This study is a testament to the pivotal role of educators in shaping children's appreciation criteria. We investigated the effects of art education given in primary school visual arts courses on children's taste criteria. For this purpose, art education was applied in the visual arts course of fourth-grade students, consisting of 19 female and 18 male students, within the five-week programme. The effects were determined by observation within the scope of qualitative research methods, highlighting the integral role of educators in this transformative process.

First, an interview was conducted to determine the students' appreciation criteria. In this direction, the topics selected for the five-week training were determined by examining the fourth-year achievements of the Visual Arts Programme. Then, lesson plans and slides related to the subject were prepared. Students were observed during the applications, and finally, a final interview was conducted to examine the change in tastes. All the data obtained were analysed.

Findings

At the beginning of the study, the following questions were asked to the students before the training, and their answers were recorded:

First question: What do you pay attention to make your painting beautiful?

In the preinterview, the majority of the students answered this question as "to be smooth, not to overflow the paint." When the application process was over, the same people added attention points related to the topics covered in their answers.

Table 2. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K13: I do it smoothly and calmly. If I paint, I try not to overflow.	K13: Colours, whether there is space, perspective, shadow, composition and large and small size
K17: I make sure that the paint does not come out of the lines and that they are straight.	K17: In my painting, I pay a lot of attention and importance to being flat. I try to put the perspective if possible. I chose the colouring to be beautiful and dark. Sometimes, I also use

	light paint. I usually use cold paint in my painting.
K20: Being smooth	K20: Escape point, draw in the middle using cold and warm colours

On the other hand, some students determined criteria that were more related to their feelings in the preinterview. Later, these students also adopted technical information.

Table 3. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K6: My opinion: When I paint, I make sure that my paints are light colours, but my drawing book should be significant. When I draw my picture, for example, the teacher says that when I draw this picture, I think I am doing it in a heavenly place like this. I feel more beautiful, but the beauty of my picture would be a rainbow.	K6: Whether it is dotted, whether it is striped, whether the colours are compatible or not, whether I have drawn carefully, whether the picture fits precisely in its place.
K11: I emphasise music when I paint; I feel and make music. In other words, every painting has its beauty and music, and I make it with music. Music is my life. The music sign on the musical painting is not a left key or a microphone. Musical painting is to feel the music while painting.	K11: For my painting to be beautiful, I first pay attention to colours, i.e., warm and cold colours, striking or appropriate colours. I pay attention to shading and realism. I pay attention to perspective.

Changes were also observed in the answers of children known to be mainstream students.

Table 4. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K15: To colour my book with my pencil	K15: I use the drawing page properly
K21: Which way the pen goes	K21: I pay attention to colours, shadows and light places

Second question: What influences your appreciation of other people's paintings?

Some students answered "being careful" to this question in the preinterview. In the last interview, they included more technical concepts in their answers.

Table 5. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K28: Taking care and colouring beautifully.	K28: I pay attention to the colour, size and shade, and I pay attention to whether he/she made his/her drawing in the centre of the paper.
K27: Using it with care	K27: Whether it is dotted or dotless, shadow and perspective

Some students expressed that they would like it. Their friend did it because they had made labour in the preliminary interview. Then, they started to determine the topics covered as criteria for evaluation.

Table 6. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K10: I would say it is good; I would say it is good that he did it with labour.	K10: I examine whether he/she drew the picture by paying attention to the composition.
K26: For example, my friend is painting, and I say it is beautiful because it has beautiful things on it.	K26: Did he/she apply the subjects we have learnt? What was his/her painting about what he/she painted, and did he/she correctly make the size and smallness?

Some students stated that they paid attention to whether the picture was meaningful or whether it appealed to their feelings. Then, they started to pay attention to technical details.

Table 7. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K24: Did he draw it carefully? What is the meaning of this drawing? Did he draw it based on his imagination? Or did he copy it?	K24: Did he use shading, composition, perspective and colouring?
K19: That the picture has meaning	K19: I evaluate what is in the picture and what he drew according to it. I evaluate according to how he/she drew and whether he/she used dots.
K11: I pay attention to music when I criticise a painting. It is essential for me to feel and see the music while looking at it, and when I say music, I am not talking about songs; I am talking about music, and I think music beautifies the painting.	K11: I pay attention to the warm cold, perspective and composition of the painting. I pay attention to careful colours and shadows.
K6: My opinion: When I saw someone else's painting, I first said it was an excellent work, then I exhibited that painting everywhere, and when I felt perfect when I looked at that painting, I even bought it for myself.	K6: Did he pay attention to his colours? Did he use only lines or dots? Where is the start line, and where is the end line? Does the colour match? Does this fit here? Are the colours on or off? Did he pay attention?

Again, many students expressed criteria such as "not overflowing the paint, drawing properly." After the training was implemented, these students' concepts, worlds and answers expanded.

Table 8. Students' Answers

Preliminary Interview	Last Interview
K5: Paint does not overflow	K5: Perspective, size and smallness of figures, escape point
K25: I look at his/her colouring without overflowing to see if he/she has drawn it crookedly and to see if it is correct; for example, I look to see if he/she has drawn the items of the car correctly.	K25: I look at whether they do not overflow and take care while colouring. I check whether the paper is worn out or not. I look to see if he/she has done perspective. I look at punctuation and colour mixture.
K12: To evaluate someone else's drawing, we should	K12: I mean, it is necessary to look at whether he/she did

consider what they draw straight and upside down.	it right, drew, coloured and whether it turned out well. To look at whether he/she coloured the empty spaces or not.
K3: First, to ensure that the paints do not mix and draw smoothly	K3: Did he make the perspective well? Did he make the escape point? Did he use hot and cold colours?

According to the answers, the students had no technical information before the training. However, after the application, the students immediately adopted the concepts studied and started to use them.

Then, five weeks of training were applied. Although the fourth-grade visual arts course was included in the programme for one hour a week, it was taught for three hours during this process. Students were not given technical information about painting in previous years. The students of the class, who had been taught by the same teacher for four years, were only given feedback such as "Very good, I liked it very much, how well you did it." The students' paintings were not subjected to any objective evaluation, and this feedback was given in the same way to each student who asked for comments about his/her painting.

In the first week, under the "Elements of Art" title, point, line, and colour elements were processed as slides with visual content on the smart board. Georges Seurat, Henri Edmond Cross, Vasily Kandinsky, Lichtenstein, Johannes Vermeer, Joseph Wright, Martin Johnson Hesade, Winslow Homer, Andy Warhol, William Turner, Doğan Arslan's paintings focused on these elements, and students were supported in examining them with questions and answers and sharing thoughts and feelings. In the ongoing lesson, the students drew pictures by taking care to use the elements of art. Afterwards, it was observed that they included educational art criticism questions related to the subject while evaluating themselves and each other.

Image 1 & 2. The Point and Line Elements Studied in the First Week



In the second week, under the title of "Composition", information and examples are given about the placement of the pictures to be drawn in a balanced, regular and pleasing way to the eye. The lesson was taught with slides, questions, and answers prepared for this purpose. Afterwards, it was observed that the students drew attention to the composition. In addition, the students were asked to evaluate their own and their friends' drawings regarding their suitability for the composition. It was determined that the students made sentences related to the composition about using drawing paper, placing the objects and colouring the paper.

Image 3. The Differentiation in the Paintings After the Composition Subject was Taught. (The lesson on colouring and using the whole paper seems to have affected the students)



In the third week, in the lecture under the title of 'Colour' accompanied by slides, the colour scale is a circular structure showing the relationship between primary and secondary colours and complementary colours; concepts such as the physical description of colour in nature, colour mixtures, contrasting and neighbouring colours, warm and cold colours, colour harmony, tonal harmony, harmony of contrasting colours, emotions triggered by colours, correct colour palette, etc., were discussed in the works of painters such as Watteau, Vallotton, Juan Gris, Corot, Marquet, and Kaninsky. When the students were allowed to look at the pictures, they wanted to examine the colour palettes from the slide left open, and it was observed that they carefully examined the mixtures they thought to use in their paintings. While evaluating the lesson products, it was determined that they asked questions about the judgement steps of description, analysis and interpretation and shared their thoughts.

Image 4 & 5. The Effect of the Lesson on Using Colours and Colour Mixtures on the Pictures



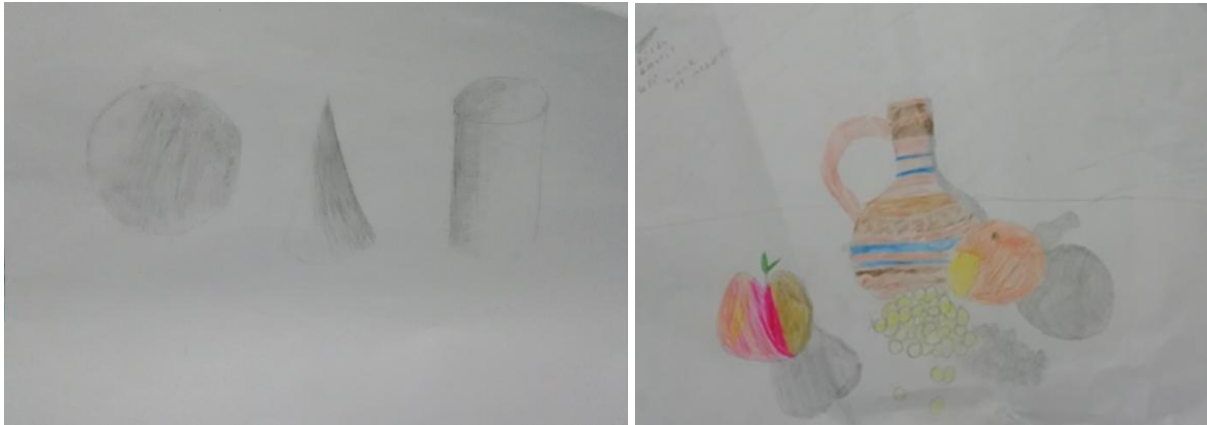
In the fourth week lesson on 'Perspective', perspective was introduced as a tool used to show three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional plane, as well as the art of measure and proportion, which is used to quickly draw and express line, surface, and colour changes according to the distance and proximity of objects to the eye, below and above the eye level. Works of painters such as Hobbema and Caponigro and technical drawings were utilised. It has been observed that the students highly regarded examples seem to merge at the point of escape even though they continue in parallel. It was thought this was because they could be drawn more efficiently than other examples. It was observed that the students immediately adopted the subject and related terms and that they sometimes questioned the drawings in terms of perspective as if they were experts while evaluating the drawings.

Image 6. About Perspective, but the Previous Week's Use of Light, Dark, and Different Colours Still Has an Effect



In the last lesson titled 'Light and Shadow' in the fifth week, the information that the light-medium-dark tone (gradient) values created by light as it spreads on objects, objects and objects are called light shadows, was given with the pictures on the slide specially prepared for the course. Since the light does not illuminate the object with the same intensity from every point, the surfaces close to the direction of light are light because they receive more light; the surfaces far from the light and behind the light appear darker because they receive less light. Question and answer work was performed on natural and light sources. In the classroom, an observation study was conducted on how tones change in light and shadow—the points to be considered while shading was conveyed to the students by trying to make them discover. In the following study, it was observed that the students paid attention to the relationship between light and shadow and made their questions and comments align with their new knowledge during the evaluation.

Image 7 & 8. Light and Shadow, Respectively (All the students presented the products first in black and white and then in colour)



At the end of this training process, the questions asked at the beginning were asked again, and the changes in their answers were analysed. These answers are given in the introduction of the findings section.

Conclusion

As a result of art education, which was linked to the programmes given to fourth-grade primary school students, the students quickly adopted educational art criticism. Before the application, the students' appreciation criteria were mainly in the form of "colouring without overflowing, drawing properly", but after the application, all of the subjects addressed were included in the appreciation criteria even if different students addressed them.

Students learned not only new techniques and a new evaluation method to use while painting but also new words and concepts to enrich their vocabulary and world of thought. They also had the opportunity to discuss and chat about art.

The students thought longer before they started drawing than before this study. This was because they learned many new criteria to be considered. In addition, it was observed that the students progressed not only in that week's topics but also in adding what they had learned before. The topics covered in the previous week are also among those to be considered in the new week.

The awareness and progress of the students in only five weeks in a class where only freehand paintings were previously made, and the technique was not emphasised is remarkable. Both the students' appreciation criteria and their paintings improved. If this study is carried out in all classes throughout primary school, the possibility of a student graduating from primary school and becoming an enthusiastic art critic will be strengthened. Students' aesthetic consciousness will improve, and an increase in the rate of aesthetic contribution to their own lives and their environment can be expected. For these reasons, teachers should be informed about the subject, and visual arts lessons should be taught as needed. In addition, course hours should be increased.

Disclosure statement

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Ethics statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical approval granted by the Ethics Committee of Yildiz Technical University.

Consent

All participants provided informed consent.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes on contributor

Elif Sami is currently working as a Primary School Teacher under the Ministry of National Education. She is also a student at Istanbul University – Cerrahpasa, Institute of Graduate Studies, Primary Teaching Doctorate program. Although she has worked with primary school students in many areas, she is currently working on skills teaching in life sciences classes. She lives in Istanbul, Türkiye.

ORCID

Elif Sami  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1473-4825>

Authors' Contributions

Elif Sami  Conceptualization, Writing – original draft and Writing – review & editing.

References

- Ayaydın, A. (2018). *Görsel sanatlar (1-8. Sınıflar) öğretmenler için öğretim materyali*. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı.
- Doğu, S. (2018). *Felsefe 2 ders kitabı*. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı.
- MEB. (2001). *Bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim programları*. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı.
- Savaş, İ. (2014). *Çocuk resmi ve bilinçaltı*. (Yüksek Lisans Tezi). İstanbul Arel Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.
- TDK. (2019). *Büyük Türkçe Sözlük*. Türk Dil Kurumu.
- Yavuzer, H. (1998). *Resimleriyle çocuk*. Remzi Kitabevi.