A Study of Mixed Media Art Creation for Children’s Picture Books

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to create art media of picture books for children using mixed media coatings. In the beginning, through document analysis, the types, characteristics, and styles of current picture books were discussed as references for the creation. Then through interactive teaching with discussions, the teacher and students started to plan for the content and the storyboard of the picture book. And the graphic script had been discussed and revised several times. And delicate sketches were completed, scanned, and edited with the software Photoshop. Finally, the art creation for picture books using both hand drawings and computer graphing with mixed media was completed.

Introduction
Paper, a ruler, paint brushes, an eraser, and colors are required by the students for the creative artwork of a picture book. Choices of paper include sketch paper, watercolor paper, and pastel paper. Paper used for covers should be of higher pounds. Choices of coloring media include pencils, marking pens, colored pencils, watercolors, poster colors, and acrylic colors. When composing a picture, before the shape is formed, a very useful and efficient tool is pencils [8]. With living standards becoming better and better, “picture books” have become more and more important. The positive guidance with rich imagination from children’s picture books may inspire children’s ability of creative thinking, help them think actively and meaningfully, and form their good habits [6].

The purpose of this study is to guide children’s thinking to the right direction to help develop positive personalities through the creation of media art works for picture books. The topics and content of picture books may include: (1) food: introducing all kinds of food, good eating habits, and the concepts of balanced feeding and no waste of food, and teaching children to eat on their own, (2) clothing: introducing all kinds of clothes and teaching children to put on and take off clothes on their own, (3) housing: introducing styles, structures, characteristics, and materials of houses and safety of living, (4) transportation: introducing vehicles, colors, and safety of walking, (5) education: introducing numbers, phonetic symbols, Chinese characters, English letters, nature, and landscape, (6) entertainment: introducing slides, swings, hide-and-seek, running, ball games, swimming, and outings, (7) interpersonal relationships and empathy, (8) emotion management, and (9) life education related issues.

Readers should be children from pre-school to elementary school second grade. It is suggested that teachers or parents can accompany or guide children to read. The rules for design include: the theme must be clear and colorful and the content must be rich, with creativity being the premise and having educational meanings being the goal.

Literature Review
Picture books are works combining “graphic languages” and “text languages”. 2D pictures with spatial features are combined with abstract symbols-text with accumulated experiences to develop a new
creation system, as if a new language with multi-media mixture [2]. The creation of art media for children’s picture books has to be presented in a tangible form to be understood and accepted. When issues of life and death are involved, usually other themes are applied instead of using black and gray colors [3], [4].

The characteristics of picture books include (1) art presented via images, (2) cognition in daily life, (3) educational attributes, (4) feeling via visuals and mind, (5) functional attributes of stimulating imagination and creation, and (6) cultural attributes [3]. Media for picture book teaching consist of (1) content and theme of a picture book, (2) presentation and layout of a picture book, and (3) visual style of a picture book [7]. Picture books created with digital media are good for guiding children’s self-learning. To design content of a story, it is important to make sure (1) conception of the story is complete, (2) the theme is clear, (3) the content is rich, and (4) there is creativity [5]. Furthermore, the features of digital art creation include being easy to revise, convenient to operate, and with various image process functions. It helps to increase the efficiency to create a picture book and improve skills of presentation [1].

Research Methods

Document analysis and discussion teaching method, were applied in this study for the mixed media art creation for children’s picture books.

Discussion teaching method
1. Interactive teaching and learning between teachers and students
2. Student starting creation of picture books under the guidance of their teachers
3. Teachers helping students with content editing and arrangement

Computer aid design
1. Media art creation for picture books
2. Digital art creation for picture books

Document Analysis
Current information which is related picture books was collected in the beginning of this study. Then discussions and analyses were conducted to provide references for this study.

Discussion Teaching Method
Discussion teaching method was applied to the art media reaction for the picture books in this study for the art creation for children’s picture books colored with mixed media, for example, the reviews and revision of script content. Then after students’ hand drawings were all completed, they were guided to edited scanned images and optimize the layout with computer software. Eventually, the art creation for children’s picture books using mixed media with combination of hand drawings and computer graphing techniques was completed.

Works of Creation
58 first-grade students from a technology university in central Taiwan were invited to create children’s picture books for this study. The teacher spent 4 hours a week with them, through individual discussions, to edit the content and revise the images of the picture books. Then delicate graphic scripts
were hand-drawn, arranged, and colored. Finally, the students were asked to make them into computer images for editing. The contents of their stories were presented orally. 2 experienced designers from the industry were invited to perform evaluation according to (1) clearness of theme (10%), (2) completeness of story conception (30%), (3) richness of content (30%), and (4) creativity (30%). The top three works and an outstanding work were chosen.

**Winning Works**

The art creation for the children’s picture books in this study was decided via storyboards. Black-and-white scripts were drawn and colored through mixed media. Post-production was done with computer image processing. Due to the space limitation, only the top work is presented here (figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>p.1</th>
<th>Cover</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p.2</td>
<td>Inside page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.3</td>
<td>Little Fei always walked alone…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.4</td>
<td>Walking silently, he didn’t notice a giant shadow behind him laughing at him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| p.5   | Little Fei swung on the swing with his mood swinging, too. Fei didn’t know where to go or why he was so lonely. |
| p.6   | Is this feather from your wing?                                       |
| p.7   | Little Fei fled from the site right away.                             |
| p.8   | Little Fei flew higher and higher. But the higher he got, the more features came off. |

| p.9   | “Little Fei is coming!” Aunt Cloud rushed out of the clouds and told everyone. The python showed its greedy, long, and sharp teeth, getting ready to swallow Little Fei at once. |
| p.10  | Little Fei flew higher and farther away from me.                      |
| p.11  | All of a sudden, Little Fei started to fall.                          |
| p.12  | The pet bear right away flew toward him and grabbed him.              |
Issue Discussions
The theme of the winning work “I Wish I Could Fly” is very clear and can be used as a fine example. As for the completeness of conception, it content is rich and with creativity. “I Wish I Could Fly” talks about the value of friendship. Establishing good interpersonal relationships with good friends is the first step of receiving school education which needs to be learned.

Discussions and Suggestions

Discussions
In this study, children’s picture books were designed and made through hand drawings, showing the passion for design education of the teacher and students from the design department and their practical skills. This is one of the features of the technology university, teachers encouraging students to learn from practice and practice from learning to increase their love for design, improve their outlooks on beauty of overall design, and raise their standard for content requirement. Then, with computer technology, software was used to create and edit image files. Color calibration and output were done through image scanning. In the future, flash software will be used to create animations for the picture books and combine them with music scores. Some of the special effects will be done with 3ds Max software which can construct 3D models. The results will be placed on the teaching platform for teachers and students to learn and to utilize. It will be beneficial to more children and parents who are willing to visit the university’s website.

Suggestions
Creating a picture book is a huge project. The one-on-one discussion teaching is a heavy but sweet burden for teachers. According to the curriculum plan of the design department, there were supposed to be two teachers guiding group activities and conducting discussions through team teaching for the major design curriculum (core curriculum). This way, teachers’ burdens can be shared and students can have more opportunities to be taught. In the recent years, due to the consideration of budget and
reduction of number of hours required to graduate, only one teacher is now teaching the curriculum. The original features of teaching curriculums for the design department have lost. It is indeed a pity. Secondly, hand drawing is a skill and training which students from design departments can not ignore. However, with the advance of technology and computer animation and game designs are all over the market. Hand drawing techniques are therefore seems out of date. They can no longer attract students. Some of students even reject them. They don’t understand that “great oaks from little acorns grow”. Only good hand drawing skills lead to the abilities required for computer graphics. This is to be worried in design education. And more attention should be paid to this issue. Of course, media art creation and digital art construction are of the same importance. However, the development of hand drawing skills is required in students’ learning phase. The researcher has been teaching for 10 years. In this not-very-short period, it is found that students who are willing to devote themselves into hand drawing have better performances in graphic art creation with computer software than others in the future.

References


