A Study of Creative Artworks of Picture Books with Tableware Colored Using Mixed Media

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Abstract
The purpose of this study is to complete the creative artworks colored using mixed media for the picture books which come as free gifts with the children’s tableware by cooperating with companies in central Taiwan. The personification method was applied to the story marketing design to create a leading character, Baby Cow, with western imagery and eastern quality. The pictures were drawn by hands because it is warm and may imply children’s healthy and vigorous qualities. The design also focuses on several good friends of the leading character, with season changes and corresponding outdoor activities. Moreover, the researcher asked a class teacher from a technology university to guide her students from the design department to make their creative artworks for picture books through group discussions. The results of their designs not only solved the companies’ designing problem but also met the expected goal. And students were able to get to know the industry earlier. The purpose of combining practices with theories for curriculum learning was achieved. And the teacher had learned more about the practical aspect, which helped to improve her professional knowledge.

Introduction
With the transformation of global economic system, in the recent years, the issue of upgrading traditional industries has been under spotlight in Taiwan. For example, the mechanism of subsidies or fee remission is introduced to school teachers so that they will cooperate with industries. It is simply because, with the support from external professional skills or related resources provide, traditional industries can be preserved and protected while still having the opportunities to reach the standard with innovation and creativity by upgrading and developing software technology, so that they can become famous on the world stage.
The industry-academia cooperation was conducted for this study. According to the companies’ requirements for creative design, this study attempted to help students design the hand-drawn picture books with children’s tableware through collaborative learning while their teacher applied a discussion teaching method. However, the hand-drawn artworks of the picture books must be based on stories, and stories need to be told by a leading character. After discussing and communicating with the companies over and over, the decision of applying story marketing method was made. Children’s true experiences were integrated as the core of design. The leisure activities and entertainments children prefer were included in the contents of the creative artworks for the picture books. It was expected that the picture books can become consumers’ motivation to purchase the tableware.

Literature Review
The “paper” in graphic creative artwork is generally defined as thin materials with tenacity suitable for sketching, such as (a) sketch paper, which is light, white, and with good color manifestation, (b) bristol
board, which is solid, heavy, proper for printing, good for finished works, and usually used for covers, and (c) dandi paper, which is commonly used in art, with minute texture, and suitable for drawing. Drawing materials are materials used for drawing, and are categorized into colors, dyestuffs, and coating according to their purposes. For examples: (a) pencils, which are mixtures of lead powder and clay, produced under high temperature. There are also color pencils with mixtures of colors, dyestuffs, talc, and resin. They are easy to use and their colors are bright, (b) poster colors, which are water-based and powdery paste and made of organic/inorganic colors, water, and Acacia gum with dry-proof and mold-proof materials. For flat coloring, their strong covering ability is good. They are water-based, easy to dry out, and durable, and (c) watercolors, which include transparent watercolors and gouaches. The former are with small particles, water. The later are like poster colors. Their colors are bright and liquidity is good for mixing colors [2].

Story-telling means to delivery a story to people who listen to the story. Marketing means to, through transactions, exchange products or services produced with things of the same value. And story-telling can be considered as a mode of marketing communication with the purpose being creating a link between products and their target customers [1], [4]. How to tell a story well? How to apply story marketing to create vitality for products? Some related documentation suggests that (a) consumers’ language must be used, (b) content of stories must be transformed from experiences, (c) lives must be given to products, and (d) stories can be used in all kinds of industries, especially for food, cosmetics, self-owned brands, tourism, collectables, and unique products. The power of story marketing can be well used. Stories of this length do not bring pressures to readers and may touch their hearts in a short time. Good brand stories may increase consumers’ willingness to listen. There are four key elements of story-telling, including (a) messages, (b) conflicts, (c) characters, (d) plots, etc [3], [5].

Research Methods

Documentary analysis was first applied to this study. Information related to the topic of the study was collected, organized, and summarized. Then analyses were conducted for the problems at issue to form the theoretical foundation of research discussions and creative artworks. Next, the researcher asked the class teacher to group her students according to their hobbies to perform collaborative learning (there were 3 students in a group). The teacher used a discussion teaching method to perform the scenario corporation of the story marketing method. The time spent was 2 hours a week for 8 weeks. Presentations were made in each phase with the companies being invited to propose their suggestions to make adjustments. Finally, in the presentation of achievements, two design and marketing specialists from the companies and two teachers with design specialty were invited to participate in the assessment as judges. The research structure is shown in figure 1.
Creative Artworks

In this study, industry-academia cooperation was conducted with the third-graders from the design department of a technology university in central Taiwan to make creative artworks for the picture books with the children's tableware. The class teacher had spent 2 hours a week for 8 weeks with her students, applying collaborative learning methods with students being divided into groups to compile the content of the picture books and to adjust the graphs. Then, more delicate graphs were drawn and colored by hands. Students were asked to create computer files for their graphs and edit them using software according to the content of the stories in the picture books. They also had to make oral reports of the content of their stories. Finally, two design and marketing specialists from the companies and two teachers with design specialty were invited to participate in the assessment as judges. The scoring rules were: (a) whether the theme is clear (25%), (b) whether the conception of the story is complete (25%), (c) whether the content is rich (25%), and (d) whether there is creativity. One group was picked as the winning group. A certificate of merit and scholarship were awarded to this group as encouragement.

Exhibition of Winning Artworks

To make the creative artworks for the picture books with the children's tableware in this study, scenario simulation of story marketing was applied, through several discussions with several adjustments, designs for characters, items, timelines, activities, and scenes were proposed in the form of storyboards. After they were finalized, black-and-white manuscripts were drawn and colored with mixed media. Computer image process was used for post-production. The winning work is presented below (figure 2).

![Figure 2 The Baby Cow picture book with the tableware](image)
Questions to Ponder
The companies commissioned this study. By adopting the story marketing method, the class teacher was able to integrate the case into the teaching and learning activities. It was hoped that the creativity of young students could soar through their understanding of how story scenarios are used and the involvement of emotions. Furthermore, the companies decided that the leading character of the picture books with the children's tableware is a "cow", and they wanted a cow which does not look like a regular cow. After being accepting the commissioned case, a series of planning and arrangements began.

In the beginning of this study, the first thing was to design appearance of the cow through the design method of personification. The idea was not limited by the restrictions and thoughts in for the real environment. Several different animals were also brought into the stories as the leading character's good friends and as the supporting characters when the leading character engages in all kinds of activities. The costumes and accessories were considered and designed according to the scenes in four seasons. The overall look is very rich with the use of colors and changes of the activity sets.

The team behind the winning artwork for children's picture books named the leading character, a "cow", "Baby Cow", in order to create a feeling of dear baby. The style of drawing was rich and the colors were bright and vivid, creating a mental perception of Baby Cow's good health and vitality and a visual imagery of his cuteness and vigorousness. The metaphor, which is made of visual symbols, of children's mental and physical health and happiness was delivered to readers. This strong point is worth learning.

Discussions and Suggestions

Discussions
(a) Conforming to the educational goal
The focus of the creative artwork in this study was on students' understanding of the design theories. Students were asked to create the picture books by hand drawing to delivery a warm and unique visual imagery, which conforms to the educational goal of equally emphasizing theories and practices.
(b) Using story marketing
This study used the story marking method. The parts which could provide space for design imagination were extracted and put into the creative artworks for children’s picture books, to stimulate the students' unlimited creativity. It meets the educational expectation that all students must possess the ability to use their specialties in diversified ways.
(c) Training for story-telling
The teacher guided her students to go back to their childhoods and, recover their favorite activities, scenes, and animals, and create events and present them with drawings. Then they were summarized in proper order, so that stories are not just simple, superficial, and fictitious contents, but presentation of truth which is soul-stirring and touching.
(d) Collaborative learning with group discussions
Collaborative learning of the discussion method was applied in this study with three students in each group. It helped the teacher and her students to clarify with each other their cognition of design values in concept. It also helped to build and develop the relationships between them.

Suggestions
(a) Theories and practices
This study suggested that industry-academia cooperation can be integrated with the teaching and learning activities of the design curriculum, so that companies' problems with designs can be solved,
and teachers and students may learn more from practices. The goal of equally emphasizing theories and practices can be achieved.

(b) Amount of money in industry-academia cooperation
The global economic recession definitely has impacts on the cooperation between schools and industries. Therefore, it is suggested that the related authorities should not judge an industry-academia cooperation case merely according to the amount of money involved.

(c) Research and development and design
If a traditional industry in Taiwan wants to be upgraded, the key lies in research and development and design, not production and manufacturing. Therefore, it is suggested that, for traditional industries, in order to preserve unique cultural values, it is invertible to emphasize the fields of research and development and design, stimulating new creativity and present new stages.

(d) Design ability
The focus of design education is on students' abilities of oral expression and writing. Therefore, this study suggested that class teachers may, according to topics of design, ask their students to make oral reports of their design achievements and write down content of their creative design, in order to train their design abilities.

References


