Original Article

Presenting a Model for Stylization for human character in Children's Narrative Fiction Illustration

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Abstract

The present research aims at presenting a model for evaluating and enhancing training the human character stylization in children's narrative fictions illustration for undergraduate students of graphic design who are weak in human character stylization. The research methodology at the phase of designing the model of the human character stylization was based on library studies, while survey studies (questionnaire) were utilized to employ expert's opinions in a subsequent phase. The designed model was submitted to seven experts, and their opinions were used to have the model approved. Used as research instruments were notes, materials in text books, papers, and related websites, as well as questionnaires. Results indicated that, for evaluating and enhancing the level of training the human character stylization in children's narrative fictions illustration to students, one needs to extract sub-indexes of human character stylization. Moreover, definition and recognition details of the model of human character stylization helps undergraduate students of graphic design to enhance the level of human character stylization in their works. Accordingly, it is recommended to design training packages to enhance these sub-indexes and hence improve the human character stylization for children's narrative fiction illustration.

Key words: Lllustration, Lllustration for children's narrative fiction, Stylization, Human character stylization

INTRODUCTION

The present research is the result of educating narrative fiction illustration to undergraduate students of graphic design. In students' art works within the scope of human character stylization, the issue of inability to create appropriate human character stylization in children's narrative fictions illustration is well exposed. In other words, when it comes to human character stylization, students just fail to use the simplification of line, form, and relationships of space and color, etc. or use these factors inappropriately or inadequately; i.e. they present inappropriate human character stylization.

In the modern world of today, the subject matter of illustration has been increasingly regarded by illustrators, publishers, audience, etc. This is while most of the student

of graphic design either neglect to present any individual human character stylization in their art works or just copy those originally created by famous illustrators.

Investigations have revealed that, the lack of recognition of the sub-indexes of the human character stylization is the general cause of an improper human character stylization by undergraduate students of graphic design. As such, generally speaking, the present research looks forward to answer the following question:

What are sub-indexes of human character stylization for children's narrative fiction illustration?

Investigating various references, no model was found for human character stylization for children's narrative fictions illustration.

In the field of engineering design, ideas or solutions are defined as the results and outputs of solving design problems. In this domain, design is studied through considering its broad sections using the terms, the design problem/task, the design process, the design type/output/proposal/solution/idea, the design activity/move/action, and the design organization/team/personnel (Pahl and

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Beitz, 1984; Ulrich and Eppinger,1995; Ullman, 2002). Therefore, ideas or proposals are the output of a design process respect to the design problem or task by a design team. To assess design process, first, the characteristics of required design proposals and ideas are defined.

Some common criteria for assessing the generated ideas and design proposals are discussed in the literature. In most research, the group performance is defined by evaluating the proposals regarding the number of ideas (Nijstad et al. 2002; Shah et al. 2003; Perttula and Sipila 2007) and Quality of ideas (Wierenga, 1998, Shah et al. 2003). Consequently, the Quality of an idea is determined by appropriateness and originality on the target task (Massetti, 1996; Runco and Jaeger, 2012) and some situations unexpectedness (Gero, 1996) and Non□ obviousness (Howard et al. 2006; Howard et al., 2008). Some examinations in engineering characterize these criteria by the level of meeting goals (Shah et al., 2003).

However, such a model was not found in the literature of illustration. Therefore, the main objective of the present research is to propose a model for evaluating and improving training in human character stylization for the children's narrative fictions illustration for undergraduate students of graphic design who are weak in human character stylization appropriately.

To this end, as a first step, available information in the literature were investigated via library studies, and an initial model was developed by considering sub-indexes of human character stylization. Afterwards, a questionnaire was prepared on the proposed model and distributed among seven experts in the field of illustration. Once the questionnaire was collected, a final model was approved according to their opinions.

In Section 1 a review is given on basic concepts of illustration, narrative fiction illustration, and stylization followed by presenting a background for the research. Section 2 delivers the research question and methodology. In Section 3, the research results are reported, followed by discussion, conclusion and some recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic concepts
Illustration
Illustration isn't art and it isn't graphic design; as a discipline, illustration sits somewhere between art and graphic design. Of course, for many practitioners it can feel closer to end of this spectrum than the other (Zeegen, 2009: 6). However, there is a distinct core that is unlike anything

else and it is this that defines its 'raison d'être'. Illustration is about communicating a specific contextualized message to an audience. It is rooted in an objective need, which has either been generated by the illustrator or a commercial based client to fulfil a particular task. It is the measure and variety of these different tasks that makes the discipline of illustration such an influential visual language (Male, 2007:10).

Today, illustration is no more worried about its distance to pure art, and this is an issue we were not face 30 years ago, and the number of pure arts further resembling illustration is ever increasing (Wiedemann, 2009:10-11).

Stylization
Stylization and stylized referring to visual depictions that use simplified ways of representing objects or scenes that do not attempt a full, precise and accurate representation of their visual appearance (mimesis or "realistic"), preferring an attractive or expressive overall depiction. More technically, it has been defined as "the decorative generalization of figures and objects by means of various conventional techniques, including the simplification of line, form, and relationships of space and color" (the Great Soviet Encyclopedia) and observed that "stylized art reduces visual perception to constructs of pattern in line, surface elaboration and flattened space" (Clark, 2006: 54).

Even in art that is in general attempting mimesis or "realism", a degree of stylization is very often found in details, and especially figures or other features at a small scale, such as people or trees etc. in the distant background even of a large work. But this is not stylization intended to be noticed by the viewer, except on close examination (Holloway, 1983: 30).

'Style' is the distinctive visual language that identifies one's 'mark' or personal iconography (covers the subject and the content of the work) (Zeegen, 2012: 173). It is that particular feature or quality that determines what kind of illustration one is associated with. It should also define one's placement within a visual, illustration genre. Like music, literature and fine art, an applied art and design discipline such as illustration will comprise numerous variations, themes and treatments. Some will represent an adherence to a contemporary trend or fashion and others will be more traditional (Male, 2007: 50).

A historical and contemporary overview of illustration will depict seemingly hundreds of styles. However, in broad terms, there are just two forms of imagery. All variations of visual language will be placed within one of these. *Literal* illustrations tend to represent pictorial truths. Here there is generally an accurate description of reality and even if the

image depicts narrative fiction of a fantastical or dramatic nature, the accent is on creating a scene that is credible. The second form of illustration can be described as *conceptual*. Here we can have metaphorical applications to the subject or visual depictions of ideas or theories. The images may contain elements of reality, but as a whole take a different form of being (Ibid).

Both forms of illustration can be applied to all five contexts of practice; information, commentary, narrative fiction, persuasion, identity. However, some styles are best suited to specific or particular uses. It can broadly be agreed upon that such is the versatility of illustration regarding the breadth of visual language that as an applied art form it can depict anything and in any style (Ibid: 51).

However, it is important to regard that stylization has to be appropriate for the subject matter, the context of operation and ensure a considered receptivity for the audience. Illustration practice is individualistic regarding visual language and there can be far reaching and challenging aspects to one's style, often to the point of utilizing more than one (Ibid).

Illustration for narrative fiction
Storytelling is often considered a prerequisite to provide visual representation of narrative fiction. Today, narrative fictional illustration is mainly encountered in children's books, graphic novels and comic strips, and specialist publications such as thematic compilations, containing mythology, gothic tales and fantasy (Male, 2007:138).

The factors of illustration for narrative fiction are character, plot, stylization, theme, style, structure, form, genre, narration, tense and other related like audience, author, idea, creativity, imagination, fiction writing, storytelling, storyboard, technique, drawing, composition, color, space, book cover, layout,… but essential one's are idea, character[1], stylization, storyboard[2], composition[3], technique and color.

Research background
According to the investigations at www.intellectbooks. co.uk, www.thomsonreuters.com, and www.elsevier.com/ solutions/scopus, we ended up with three books. These research works were studied, with their results presented in the following.

Illustration: A Theoretical & Contextual Perspective (2007) presents a brief discussion on stylization in a section entitled as *The Nature of Imagery*. In the present research, this title is reviewed and investigated.

A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second-Family Bestiary, Commentary, Art, Text and Translation (2006), *The Slumber of*

Apollo: Reflections on Recent Art, Literature, Language and the Individual Consciousness (1983) also present a brief discussion on stylization. In the present research, these two titles are reviewed and investigated.

Despite the attempt made, no further book, paper or research activity was found where the subject matter of the present research was particularly discussed. That is to say, the identification of the sub-indexes of the human character stylization in children's narrative fictions illustration seems to be a new topic in art studies throughout the world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research question
What are sub-indexes of human character stylization for children's narrative fictions illustration?

Data collection method
Research terms, concepts, and literature were collected by investigating available material on virtual and physical spaces in combination with such methods as text-reading, note-taking, and picture-reading, and the model structure was developed based on field surveys.

Data collection instrument
In the present research, notes, materials published in text books, papers, journals, and related websites, and also questionnaires were used to collect the required data.

Research method
As a first step, based on practical experience of illustration and training illustration courses by the researcher, lack of recognition of sub-indexes of human character stylization in narrative fiction illustration for children was identified as the root cause of the problem of improper human character stylization by the students. As such, library resources were used to extract different indexes related to stylization.

A historical and contemporary overview of illustration will depict seemingly hundreds of styles. However, there are just two forms of imagery. All variations of visual language will be placed within one of these. Literal illustrations tend to represent pictorial truths. The second form of illustration can be described as conceptual (Male, 2007: 50). (Table 1)

Stylization has been defined as "the decorative generalization of figures and objects by means of various conventional techniques, including the simplification of line, form, and relationships of space and color" (the Great Soviet Encyclopedia) (Table 2)

So, the researcher proceeded to design sub-indexes of stylization in narrative fiction illustration based on the above indexes, as follows: (Table3)

Afterwards, the researcher proceeded to design sub-indexes of human character stylization in children's narrative fictions illustration based on the above index and her practical experience of illustration, as follows: (Table4)

OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS

A questionnaire themed by the proposed model was developed using structured method with "close-ended"

questions. It was then submitted to seven Iranian experts in the field of illustration. They were selected based on their educations (MA and PhD) and teaching experiences in Illustration. At the end of the questionnaire, the experts were asked to mention any index other than those incorporated into the model, if necessary (Table 5).

The experts' responses to each of the sub-indexes mentioned in the model are presented in Table 6.

The experts had not any recommendation toward enhancing and improving the model.

Once the questionnaires were collected and the experts' responses were processed, the model was approved according to their opinions as the final model (Table 4).

- *Presentation of the most obvious silhouette*1, refers to the presentation of human face (full face or profile) and presentation of human body (upper limb and hands in front view, feet in front view or profile view).
- *Presentation of the simplest view angle*, refers to the presentation of the view angle to the face, hands, feet, and upper limb in front view. This presentation is, however, separately applied for each part of body, so that each part is presented in the most obvious way. This presentation shall be considered separately,

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1   Presentation of obvious silhouette refers to recognizability of character's generalities and movements in the silhouette.

Table 1: (Male, 2007: 50)

| Stylization | 1. Conceptual stylization
2. Literal stylization |
|---|---|

Table 2: (The great soviet encyclopedia)

| Stylization | 1. simplification of line, form
2. simplification of relationships of space
3. simplification of color |
|---|---|

Table 3:

Stylization	1. Conceptual stylization	1. Simplification in line, shape, form
		2. Simplification in relationships of space
		3. Simplification in color
	2. Literal stylization	1. Simplification in line, shape, form
		2. Simplification in relationships of space
		3. Simplification in color

Table 4: Model of sub-indexes of human character stylization in children's narrative fictions illustration

Stylization for human character in children's narrative fiction illustration	1. Conceptual stylization	1. Simplification in spatial relations	1. Presentation of the most obvious silhouette
			2. Presentation of the simplest view angle
			3. Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses
			4. Presentation of simplification in details
		2. Simplifications in line, shape and form	Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms
		3. Simplification in color	1. Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors
			2. Providing simple colors
	2. Literal stylization	1. Simplification in spatial relations	1. Presentation of the most obvious silhouette
			2. Presentation of the simplest view angle
			3. Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses
			4. Presentation of simplification in details
			5. Presentation of proportionalities among different components and also between the components and the whole according to those of the real model
		2. Simplifications in line, shape and form	1. Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms
			2. Presentation of simplification in the form, shape, and line based on the real model
		3. Simplification in color	1. Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors
			Presentation of simple colors 2.
			3. Presentation of colors in stylization based on the colors of the real model

Table 5: The questionnaire submitted to the experts

Stylization for human character in children's narrative fiction illustration	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
1. Conceptual stylization				
1. Simplification in spatial relations				
1. Presentation of the most obvious silhouette				
2. Presentation of the simplest view angle				
3. Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses				
4. Presentation of simplification in details				
2. Simplifications in line, shape and form				
Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms				
3. Simplification in color				
1. Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors				
2. Providing simple colors				
2. Literstylization				
1. Simplification in spatial relations				
1. Presentation of the most obvious silhouette				
2. Presentation of the simplest view angle				
3. Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses				
4. Presentation of simplification in details				
5. Presentation of proportionalities among different components and also between the components and the whole according to those of the real model				
2. Simplifications in line, shape and form				
1. Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms				
2. Presentation of simplification in the form, shape, and line based on the real model				
3. Simplification in color				
1. Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors				
Presentation of simple colors 2.				
3. Presentation of colors in stylization based on the colors of the real model				

Table 6: Summary of the experts' opinions

Stylization for human character in children's narrative fiction illustration	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Comments
1. Conceptual stylization	7	0	0	
1. Simplification in spatial relations	6	1	0	
1. Presentation of the most obvious silhouette	7	0	0	
2. Presentation of the simplest view angle	5	2	0	
3. Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses				
4. Presentation of simplification in details				
2. Simplifications in line, shape and form	5	2	0	
Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms				
3. Simplification in color	7	0	0	
1. Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors	7	0	0	
2. Providing simple colors				
2. Literal stylization	7	0	0	
1. Simplification in spatial relations	6	1	0	
1. Presentation of the most obvious silhouette	7	0	0	
2. Presentation of the simplest view angle	5	2	0	
3. Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses	5	2	0	
4. Presentation of simplification in details				
5. Presentation of proportionalities among different components and also between the components and the whole according to those of the real model				
2. Simplifications in line, shape and form	7	0	0	
1. Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms	7	0	0	
2. Presentation of simplification in the form, shape, and line based on the real model				
3. Simplification in color	7	0	0	
1. Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors	7	0	0	
Presentation of simple colors 2.	7	0	0	
3. Presentation of colors in stylization based on the colors of the real model				

particularly when the human is performing a specific movement. For example, when presenting a hand, all of the five fingers shall be visible in general, but when it comes to the presentation of a hand holding

a glass, it is possible to either illustrate all of the five fingers, or the thumb in isolation from the other four fingers (in profile view), or only the four fingers on the glass (Figure 1). The important thing to note is to develop the most obvious silhouette. The choice of either of these cases depends on the stylization mode incorporated into the work. When presenting a foot, in general, it is possible to demonstrate either the thumb only or all of the five fingers in the foot. (Figure 1)

- *Presentation of simplification in figure, movements, and poses* refers to the preservation of the figure, pose, or movement while having it stylized. For example, if the real human model is walking, the stylization shall preserve the act of walking.
- *Presentation of simplification in details* not refer to elimination of details, but rather refers to their preservation while having them stylized. For instance, if the real model wears a floral shirt, the flowers should not be eliminated during stylization, but rather all of them shall be stylized along with the rest of the model.
- *Presentation of proportionalities among different components and also between the components and the whole according to those of the real model* refers to avoidance of disproportionate head, body, and/or other components.
- *Presentation of simple lines or simple or geometrical shapes and/or presentation of simple or geometrical forms* this means that, should there is a need for a line or shape or form when stylizing a model, the line presentation should be either lightly formed or non-formed, the shape presentation should be two-dimensional yet simple or geometrical (circular, triangular, squared, etc.), and the form presentation should be three-dimensional yet simple or geometrical (spherical, conical, cubic, etc.), in relation to the real model. For instance, an eye shall be represented by a circle, while a nose is better to be represented by a triangle.
- *Presentation of simplification in the form, shape, and line based on the real model* refers to the observation of linear, shape-based, and form-based similarities of the stylized work to the real model. For instance, if the character's face resembles an ellipse, circle, or square, this similarity shall be considered in the stylization.
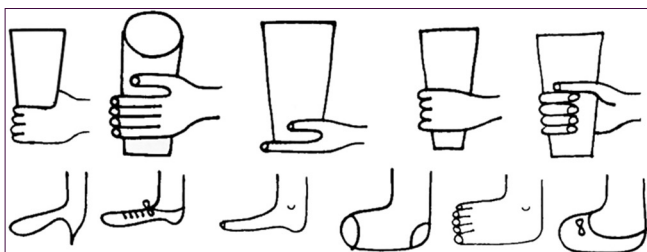- *Presentation of flat or briefly toned colors*; refers to the representation of lines and flat surfaces in colors

without highlight, while presenting colors of brief tonality for developing highlights on simple volumes.
- *Presentation of simple colors* refers to the presentation of primary and complementary colors along with black and white colors in flat works, and the presentation of primary and complementary colors along with black and white colors with their tonalities in volumetric works.
- *Presentation of colors in stylization based on the colors of the real model* refers to stylization of the colors of the real model.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present research was performed aiming at presenting a model for evaluating and enhancing the training on human character stylization in children's narrative fiction illustration for undergraduate students of graphic design who are weak in human character stylization. For this purpose, sub-indexes of human character stylization in children's narrative fiction illustration were identified. Elaborating on this finding, the followings can be stipulated:

- For evaluating and enhancing the level of training the human character stylization in children's narrative fiction illustration to students, one needs to extract sub-indexes of human character stylization.
- Definition and recognition of the model of human character stylization in children's narrative fiction illustration helps undergraduate students of graphic design to enhance the level of human character stylization in their works skill by recognizing details of human character stylization.
- Generally, two types of human character stylization may exist:
  1. Literal human character stylization
  2. Conceptual human character stylization
- For the sake of stylization, principle criteria of conceptual and real stylizations shall be considered in the order of significance. That is to begin with stylization of generalities and then proceed to details, with the color being important in the nest place.
- The main difference between conceptual and literal stylizations of a human character lies on the necessity for considering the proportionalities between components and also between components and the whole, and presentation of the form, shape, line, and colors in stylization based on real model.
- In order to present a suitable conceptual stylization, it is first necessary to attain skills in presenting literal stylization.

It is recommended that:
- Considering the proposed model, training packages shall be designed and provided to the students.

Figure 1: Stylization of hand and foot (*Source: Author***)**

Effectiveness of these packages and efficiency of the model can define topics for future research.

- Searching for more detailed sub-indexes can be a topic for future research.
- Investigation of stylization of animals, plants, objects, etc. can be a subject for future research.
- Investigation of stylization of humans, animals, plants, objects, etc. for other age groups can serve as a topic for future research.
- Investigation of the effect of perception of spatial relationships on stylization or characterization[4] can be a subject for another study.
- Investigation of criteria of deformation of human character and abstraction of human character can provide a topic for future research.

-Endnotes

1 A character (sometimes known as a fictional character) is a person or other being in a narrative fiction work of art.
2 A storyboard is a graphic organizer in the form of illustrations or images displayed in sequence for the purpose of pre-visualizing a motion picture, animation, motion graphic or interactive media sequence.
3 In the visual arts, composition is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject. It can also be thought of as the organization of the elements of art according to the principles of art.
4 The creation or construction of a fictional character.

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