



ART-INTEGRATED PEDAGOGY: For English and Chinese Language Learners

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify how art-integrated teaching methodology might help learners to absorb contents more effectively than the traditional teaching methodology. There are many schools in the U.S. started to use art-integration multimodal approach in school curriculum on different academic subjects. This research focuses on the art-integrated pedagogy in linguistic language, especially for English language learners and Chinese language learners. The researcher approaches the subject with illustrating a collection of personal cases about art-integrated pedagogy used in teaching and learning environment. This art-based research produces two teaching materials designed to answer the questions that were frequently asked in the researcher's teaching and learning experiences, and they are the products of the process of finding the solutions. This research is hope to encourage language teachers to design their own art-integrated teaching materials.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“All communication takes place through language; not all languages use words...”
- Peter Bonicci

In the summer of 2002, my parents took me to Japan for the first time. It was my first trip to a country that I didn't speak nor understand the language. The second night in Japan, I noticed that many Japanese girls were wearing Yukata, a traditional Japanese summer garment. I was curious as to why they were wearing that, so I asked one of the girls on the street, and I will never forget how she responded to my question. She first smiled at me, gestured both of her hands in front of her chest, then repeated the motion of pulling tips of her fingers together and spreading them out, while raising her arms up and down, saying “Shoo. Bon. Shoo. Bon. Shoo. Bon.....” I immediately understood that she was imitating the motion of fireworks. She then showed me her fan, which had drawings of fireworks, sky lanterns, and night markets elements. It turns out that day was their summer festival. They would usually enjoy night-market foods and have fun playing game at stations at early night, then later gather near the river to watch fireworks and sky lanterns. That was the most amazing night that I will remember forever, I enjoyed all of the beautiful fireworks and festivities at the night market. It was my first time actually communicating with people that didn't speak the same language as myself. Little did I know at the time that the gestures and images I used to communicate that night are also languages.

PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF ART

Languages have played an important role in my life before I understood anything.

My grandfather used to paint Chinese paintings and write calligraphy every Saturday morning. Whenever I visited his house on a Saturday, I would always hang around in his study room. The room was full of treasures, two pieces of calligraphy hung from the ceiling to the floor, mountains and mountains of rice papers piled up behind his seat and all different sizes of Chinese brushes hanging on the desk. Sometimes, he would give me a brush and rice papers, and let me just play and explore with the brush and ink next to him. At the beginning, I spent more time painting myself than painting on the rice paper. But then as I grew a bit older, I started to imitate my grandfather. I would trace over his writing and drawing, or ask him to hold my hand and draw together. Thinking back, this was the beginning of me learning through exploration.

To have the freedom to explore really helped me with developing my sense of the world.

When I was a baby, my parents applied for residency in the United States. However, it wasn't that easy and fast to get a green card, so my parents wanted to prepare me for the U.S. school system, by sending me to an experimental elementary school, Jian Kang Elementary School (JKES), located in Taipei, Taiwan. The experimental elementary school based their pedagogy and curriculum on school systems' in the United States, Japan, and Switzerland.

Unlike traditional Taiwanese Schools, JKES focused on the parents' involvement with their children's learning. We had a lot of assignments that could only be completed with parents, like writing journals and taking photos after visiting museums and events or cooking a dish for our parents, then writing a small report about the experience. What I remembered most, is that as a class, the teacher often took us to parks and challenged us to find different leaves or rocks, and whoever found the most variety, got to do a little show and tell at the end of the week. I felt like I explored the world and experienced life differently than other traditional school students through all the activities we did in class and outside of school. Also, compared to other elementary schools around us, JKES had the smallest student body, and because of that, each of us had a very close relationship with all of our teachers including the principal. The experience of attending an experimental school established my education path as exploration and experimental.

Transiting into a different education system has impacted my understanding of learning.

After many years of waiting for a green card, since we had no idea when it would come, my parents started to build another academic pathway for me. After I graduated from JKES, they enrolled me in a traditional Taiwanese middle school, in order to get ready for the high school entrance exam. It was a completely different system than my elementary school. There were a lot more students, longer school hours, and more assignments on academic subjects. The high school entrance exam ironically is more difficult to pass than the college entrance exam. Therefore, many students start to prepare by attending an after-school academy once they start fifth grade.

Since I went to an experimental elementary school, I wasn't preparing for the entrance exam. The summer before I entered middle school, I had to attend an after-school academy every day and try to catch up with other students. Since that summer, I attended the academy every day for the following years up until the day before leaving for the U.S. I didn't really mind going to the academy, although it took away almost all my leisure time, but I did learn a lot and made many friends. However, the one thing that bothered me the most, even still today, is that the middle school blocked off time for visual art and music courses in our schedule, but we spent that time taking the mock exam on subjects that would be tested in the high school entrance exam instead of learning about arts.

*My creativity got locked into a box,
it was hidden by my teachers, my parents, and the expectation of society.*

During my first year in middle school, my grandfather had a stroke, and he needed rehabilitation for a couple of years before he was able to write calligraphy and paint again. So our calligraphy and Chinese painting sessions on Saturday mornings got canceled. I also started to put more effort into catching up with the academics at after school academy. The two years I attended traditional Taiwanese middle school, I didn't really have a chance to explore my creativity at all. Every day, I woke up early to go to school, then after school, I went straight to the after-school academy to prepare for the entrance exam. Ninety percent of my time during those years was spent within an academic learning setting, I had no time to explore creative thinking. All I was required to do was to memorize the formulas, the year of wars, the poems, the periodic table, and all the other things that would appear on the high school entrance exam. Then in the summer of 2007, a letter changed everything. My family received our immigration acceptance letter from the United States.

It's not just a new chapter, it's like a brand new blank journal that I am free to do whatever I want.

White was the first and only color I saw. Everything was covered in snow. The day that my family arrived in the United States was December 15th, 2007. I will never forget that day. I had been to the U.S. two times before 2007, but both times, I was here during summer vacations. I had never seen this much snow before because in Taiwan it didn't snow. I was thrilled and also scared of this new land. Since the semester was ending at the time, I wasn't able to go to school. I had almost two months of time and just stayed at home. Every day, I would look out the window from my room, and only see mountains and mountains of snow. It was exciting for me because I could feel that this was not just a new chapter in my life, but this was a brand new journal or sketchbook, that I was free to do whatever I wanted. I was free to explore again. It was not only a change of place to me but also a chance to learn in a new way. So I literally spent probably a couple days just playing with snow. It was the first time I made a snow angel, the first time I had a snowball fight, the first time I made a snowman, and the first time I had a white Christmas, everything was the first time for me. I felt like a baby again, that I hadn't met this world, and everything was new, beautiful and exciting, I doodled every day until the new semester started.

Art becomes another language for me to express my thoughts and feelings.

Just two weeks before the new semester started, a family emergency came up and my parents had to return to Taiwan. So I ended up going to school two weeks earlier than the new semester began. For those two weeks, I had two classes, Studio Art and ESL. Mrs. Brown, who was my art teacher, later became my mentor in art.

She let me sit-in on her Studio Art II class, and I was free to do either their assignment or draw anything. During the break, she would look at my drawing and give me some advice, and I felt that I was really learning, and improving in art. Whereas in my middle school, the teacher just graded our assignments but never told us when we did well, and where we could improve. At the same time, I realized that I often used drawings and symbols to explain to my teacher in other subjects what I was trying to say. These two weeks really inspired me to use art as another language to express thoughts and feelings. Once I regained the access to art education, I wanted to try various techniques, and explore more about art.

I was like a dog without its leash. I had the privilege to explore the world and do all of the creative things while I was in elementary school, then during middle school, the privilege got taken away and I felt very constrained. In high school, I had the chance to regain the privilege, I was thrilled. Especially because school ended at two in the afternoon in the United States instead of six at night in Taiwan, I had a lot more time to explore and develop my own interests, I started to pay much more attention to all the arts around me. During summer, there was a program called Free Fun Friday, that had many museums open for free during the summer for families in Massachusetts. Every Friday, every summer throughout my high school years, my family would choose a museum and visit. Toward my junior year, I started to consider going to art school and choosing art as my career. I began to think about what major I should choose in art. I have always enjoyed working with materials, doing crafts, and just really liking every part of art making. So I chose animation because I felt like with animation, I could create art using little bits of every field.

2012 was the most important year of my life, it was full of change and transition. There were big changes, like my grandfather passing away, getting accepted into Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and finally, obtaining my naturalized citizenship. There were also small changes, like I moved from home to a dorm, and cut my hair from my waist to right above my shoulders. I remembered there was news of people freaking out because they believed the world was going to end in 2012, based on Mayan's calendar. Then the quote came out: "It is not the end; it was only the beginning." I was very inspired by this quote because it really fit with my life in 2012. A chapter of my life finished, and now I was going to start a new chapter.

After entered art college, I took courses in paper-making, using clay to model figures, developing film in the darkroom, printmaking and creating sets for animation and more. I tried to take courses that offered a variety of techniques that I didn't have access to before. I took almost all the ancient art history courses that school offered because I was so eager to learn about how art started and how it transformed to now. And through my time at the college, I realized that I learned things like knowing how to bind a book, drill a hole in wood using a machine, the history of Byzantine Empire and so much more. Every single day, I felt like I was a different person from yesterday because I learned something new. This was the moment that I understood the importance of art education. Thus I really wanted to not only expand my own art education but also teach others about how great art is.

Art education has affected many integral parts of my life, I experienced the absence of it, and also experienced the strong presence of it.

I have been teaching English and Chinese to language learners for a couple years, and have always used art projects to help them learn more about not only the languages but also the culture. It just occurred to me that beside the linguistic language- English, and Chinese, I was also teaching them visual language. This hit me the most the first day I walked onto Rhode Island School of Design campus. I was surprised by the amount of international students. People were throwing out different languages next to my ears, some I understood, and some I had no clue as to what language they were saying. There were lots of international students, however, everyone seemed so close to each other. The whole community felt really intimate and lovely. This is because although not everyone's first language was the same, everyone was most comfortable with the language of arts.

This is an art -based research on how art integration pedagogy can act as a tool for English and Chinese language learners. The second chapter is a collection of personal cases of how arts integration was used in traditional classrooms through my learning and teaching experiences. The third chapter is talking about expression, communication, and experience in different cultures with some literature reviews and cases. The fourth chapter is a documentation of two project developments from the idea sketches to the final products. These two projects are “The Roots” and “Last Piece of Puzzle,” they are two teaching materials that I designed for language learners based on personal teaching and learning practices. The goal of this research is to help encourage language teachers to develop their own teaching materials or inspire them to design arts integrated curriculums for their students.

CHAPTER TWO

ART INTEGRATION: A METHODOLOGY FOR LEARNING

“The arts expand the modes available to children as they seek to understand and express their conceptions of the world around them.”

– Meryll R. Goldberg

Art integration is a teaching methodology of combining the fine and performing arts as a lens of learning. Throughout my education experiences, both as a student and as a teacher, I realize that art-integrated curriculum has a strength of being a productive and enjoyable pedagogy for both educators and language learners. To demonstrate the reason of this statement, I will share stories that I have experienced and how they became the roots of my understanding.

One of the most popular art integrated lessons for literature is poetry. There are many types of poems, like sonnet, limerick, acrostic, haiku, ballad and beyond. Out of all these types of poems, the most used for art integrated lessons is haiku. Haiku is a type of poem originally from Japan; it’s a three-line poem with seventeen syllables, written in a 5/7/5 syllable count. Popular for its simplicity, intensity, and directness of expression, haiku is the best at illustrating an image with languages. (“Haiku: Poetic Form”, 2016)

*Winter seclusion–
Listening, that evening,
To the rain in the mountain.
–Kobayashi Issa*

*No one travels
Along this way but I,
This autumn evening.
–Matsuo Basho*

(“Famous Haiku”, n.d.)

These two poems were written by famous poets, Kobayashi Issa and Matsuo Basho. Haiku is mostly themed with nature and seasons, which is a friendly theme for everyone to write about. When I was in high school, my ESL (English as Second Language) teacher taught us to write haiku at the beginning to get more comfortable with writing in English. Learning how to write haiku before going straight to writing a two-page essay was really helpful. Since the writer is constrained to compose in short sentences, and limited with a number of syllables, this forced the language learners to focus on describing the subjects than worrying about the grammar.

In 2010, I went on a mission trip with my church to Taiwan during the summer. The first two weeks of our trip was teaching English to elementary school students in Southern Taiwan. We collaborated with two elementary schools and had a one-week summer camp at each school. I was in charge of third and fourth-grade students for both schools, and the theme of my class was food. The first three days, I taught them food vocabularies in English and we discussed the different foods in America and Taiwan. Then the last two days, I taught them how to create a mini book from a piece of paper and had them using the vocabularies they learned from the past couple days to create a comic book that introduced Taiwanese food to foreigners. Every student enjoyed this assignment, and I realized that some students' writings were poetic, because they thought about some restaurants' posters that have simple phrases and languages. For example, I remembered one student who nearly had zero experience in English prior to the camp wrote, "Rice, Fried Chicken, Bubble Teas. They are delicious. Welcome. Welcome." I was amazed by this student that within three days of learning English and probably had no idea what haiku is, created a poem that is short, simple and direct like haiku. The constrained form of poems sometimes makes poets create unlimited imaginations with limited words.

Back when I was in high school, I took a Theater English class where instead of reading and analyzing novels, we read and analyzed playbooks. Mrs. Arena, the teacher of the class, was a teacher who used art integrated pedagogy in her English class. I remembered we read three long plays and some small plays over the semester, and each time for the long plays, we would be doing something different and fun to learn more about the play. The first play, each student was assigned to a character from the story before we started reading, and Mrs. Arena would take all the minor and small characters. During our reading, based on each character, she would change her tone and voices, and if the play instructed, she would act out the scene, making the reading lively. Many students including myself were encouraged by her action, and besides just reading out the lines from the play, we also acted out the scene and changed our tone and voice depending on the instructions in the playbook.

The second play, Mrs. Arena introduced us to *Commedia dell'arte* (literally, "comedy of professional artists"), an Italian improvised theatrical performance played by stock characters which was widespread over Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Stories were based on a basic scenario that was often familiar to the public, and actors improvised their dialogue. In order for the audience to quickly recognize the characters that were played, each character had a specific looking mask that identified them even if it is a different mask in another show. The most basic four types of mask are Pantalone, the old man; *il Capitano*, the young and adventurous man; Zanni, the servant; and Pulcinella, another old man but more crooked and crippled.

I was assigned to create the character under Zanni-Harlequin's mask. Harlequin besides being a servant, was also portrayed as the clown and storyteller of the play. Unlike most of other Zanni's masks that have a pointy nose, Harlequin's mask has a cute big round nose, and two swirl cheeks. I remember we spent two classes to make the mask with paper-mache, and everyone was so pleased with their masks, we performed one of the scenes from the play with our masks in class. ("Commedia dell'arte", 2007)

Then there's the third play—Macbeth, by William Shakespeare. We collaborated with the Film Editing class for this play. We were divided into groups, and each group selected a scene they wanted to play. After we memorized all the lines and rehearsed a couple times, we went into the school's shooting room to act it out. With the help of students from Film Editing class, we recorded all the scenes, and they were in charge of putting them together in a sequence and adding some effects to make it look better. At the end of the semester, two classes came together and watched the final film. Every student was very happy and satisfied with the outcome. These are great examples of art integration with literature in movement, and I always keep this experience in heart. I later found a way to incorporate students' physical engagements with literature in my teaching methodology.

In 2015, I was teaching Chinese traditional opera hand-puppets class in a Chinese cultural summer camp at Weston, MA. I taught groups from third graders to seventh graders for a week. Most groups only came to my class only once during the camp to make the puppets, but the fourth-grade group met me four times in that week because we were going to perform a skit at the camp's closing ceremony.

It was a big challenge to me, even though there were only 10 students in that group, but the gap of each student's Chinese speaking and comprehensive ability was huge. First, I thought about having them write a short story together, but quickly I gave up on that idea. I found out based on their various capacities of using Chinese, there was no way we can produce a script in an hour. So instead, I chose a story from *The Journey to the West*, a very famous Chinese novel, that talks about a group of three companions following their master heading to the West for a sutra. Although all the students in that group were American-Born-Chinese, they all heard from their parents or watched dramas about it. I chose one of the scenes that was the most popular among the students and helped them to modify the script. It was like the *Commedia dell'arte*, with the familiar characters and storyline. Students were quickly inspired by the stories and picked their own characters, improvising the dialogue and actions they want to do. Some students went to add more decorations on their hand-puppets, so they fit with the image of the characters; some students with higher Chinese ability were helping others to translate their dialogues into Chinese. It was such a joy to see all the students so involved in the process.

Then the day of the closing ceremony came. After their performance, students walked off the stage, and I was waiting for them at the backstage. I saw each student come back with a big smile on their face, and still doing actions with their puppets. We had a group feedback where I asked them how they felt now that it was over. They were jumping up and down, saying that they were nervous but they loved it. At that time, a girl who wasn't good at Chinese said she wished she could do it again, and this time, she would practice more and pronounce words better. I was surprised and grateful that instead of being regretful for mispronouncing words, she took this as a motivation to better her pronunciation.

I believe when students are exercising their creative thinking, they are in their happiest state. The joy of being creative will be their motivation for absorbing more knowledge to inform their works.

ARTS AS MULTIMEDIA

The world is rapidly changing every day: projects that overlap and connect between different fields become more and more frequently. To get the children that are growing up in this fast-paced environment ready for the world, the educators need to make the new technology a common tool in education. This following story that I want to share is the only story in this chapter that is not my own personal experience, but this is such a successful case about art integrated into language teaching with new technology that I decided to include it in this chapter.

Mrs. Lee, a world language teacher, currently is teaching Chinese level four and five at a high school in New Hampshire. She shared this project that she taught in her Chinese Five class at a conference I went to. Most students that were in the Chinese Five class learned Chinese for about two to three years prior to her class. That meant, most of their Chinese was at an intermediate level. Mrs. Lee started the lecture by showing a couple videos that were made by the students, then later went into explaining the process.

The project was called “Around the World,” which was to make a three to five-minute film introducing a country that was selected by students, the students had to introduce in Chinese. Mrs. Lee first handed them a list of ten categories about the country students needed to address. They were politics, history, traditions, holidays, weathers, geographies, economies, society structures, traditional attires and the most important one—foods. The students had the freedom to pick eight categories they wanted to talk about out of ten. This was a huge project for the high school students because they were required to play various roles at the same time to create the film. The students had to research the countries, write the scripts for the narration, look up videos about the countries, record the narration, and learn how to use a video editing program to put everything together. Rather than taking the final exam, Mrs. Lee made this as their final for Chinese Five.

It was a long process because the students needed to first record what they found about the country and translate the information into Chinese. Mrs. Lee knew that some students were quick-witted, and would use Google Translator, so she asked them to use vocabularies that were taught in previous classes. This method required students to look back on what they have learned in this semester, review the vocabularies, and put what they actually learned in use. Then, Mrs. Lee asked the computer technician in the school to come and teach students how to use the video-editing program. I personally really like this part of the process, because I think this art-integrated class educated students not only the skill of Chinese but also the skill of using software. From the final videos that Mrs. Lee showed us, I could tell that the students were really enjoying this project, having fun in the process, and putting lots of effort into creating the video. This will be a great asset for them in the future, knowing how to tell a story using their creative thinking.

Two years before the conference, I created an art-integrated project that includes literature, movement, and multimedia for a specific class. The class was a second grade bilingual class in Chinese Sunday School, we only met two hours on Sundays. Although I didn't have too much time with the class, I still tried to do something fun and include exciting projects in the curriculum. The seventh week of the semester, the supervisor wanted the students to have a speech contest in class. With no doubt, many students refused to do the speech contest in front of everyone and didn't want to prepare the script. Luckily, since it was just an in-class contest, I had more control of how I wanted it to be. I changed the speech contest into a story-telling marathon. I asked them to choose a story either that could be a personal story, a fairy tale, a story that is from a book they read recently or just a story they wanted to share with the class. First, I encouraged them to try to write down the story in Chinese, but they were free to use English on the parts they didn't. Then, I went through the story with each of them and translated words they didn't know into Chinese. In that way, they also learned new vocabularies. Since the stories were what students wanted to share with the class, they really cared about the pronunciations and the clarity of the story. At the end of the first class, we divided the students into two groups based on their stories, one was personal story, and another one was fable. However, even though it was a story they wanted to share, some students still didn't want to say it in front of the class, so I asked them to record it with their phone and send the audio file to me. Surprisingly, within some of the students that refused to do it on stage, most actually put a lot of voice acting into their stories. It was really heart-warming to see students themselves putting efforts into projects that they really enjoyed doing. After I got their audio files, I felt that it was too boring to just play the audio in class, so in order to make this even more interesting, I decided that they needed to perform their stories along with the audio.

We dedicated the next class for making props and planning the performance. Each student made at least two props that went along with their stories, and the fable group even made props that they could share together. At first, I didn't want students to have too much pressure, so I planned to just do it with our small class, but with all the efforts that they put in, I felt more people needed to see their hard work. So with the agreement of all the students, I invited their parents to come and watch it. It was a wonderful experience, students were satisfied with their performance, and their parents were proud of what their children could do. I was glad that I thought of this alternative way of doing the speech contest, that even though the new technology didn't play a huge role in the product, but it was what made the students willing to be part of what we did at the end.

CHAPTER THREE

**EXPRESSION, COMMUNICATION AND
EXPERIENCE IN DIFFERENT
CULTURES**

“Language is a system of signs that express ideas.”

- Arthur Berger

Visual language, body language, and linguistic language are created and developed, so humans can express and communicate their concepts to one another. The intention of education is hoping that in the future the student will use the knowledge he/she learned out in the society. Especially subjects like—world language, the application of using second language becomes more and more vital in our present world. Yet, learning a language is not just knowing how to speak, read, and write; it is to be able to express yourself and communicate with another person. Art brings the expression, communication, and experience in different cultures closer to each other.

Each language contains its cultural memory, history and semiotics. “Semiotics is the science of signs, a sign being anything that can be used to stand for something else.” (Berger, 2014) The semiotics of a language are symbols with meanings that its users agreed upon. Semiotics can be color representations, facial expressions, and pictographs. Examples of color representations are like red means stop, green means go, and recycle bins are usually blue. Example of facial expressions are frowning face means dissatisfied, raising cheeks means happy, and rolling eyes means annoyed. Pictographs are pictorial symbols that have meaning, like a heart shape means love, a circle with short strokes all around it means sun, and a solid triangle pointing toward right means play. In fact, many written languages that have ancient histories were transformed from pictures, for example, ancient Egyptian and Chinese hieroglyph characters.

Many semioticians study various aspects on how humans interact and communicate, and at the same time, they create and develop ways for more people to easily connect with each other. Actually, one of the semioticians invented a non-verbal, pictograph communication system that is so effective, it now has been used by users in over fifty-five countries as their alternative communication system.

Charles K. Bliss, invented the Blissymbolics, a pictograph system for the purpose of international communication, between 1942 - 1949. He wanted this system to be used by people from different language backgrounds to have a common way to communicate. Therefore, Bliss designed a set of basic symbols using geometric graphics.

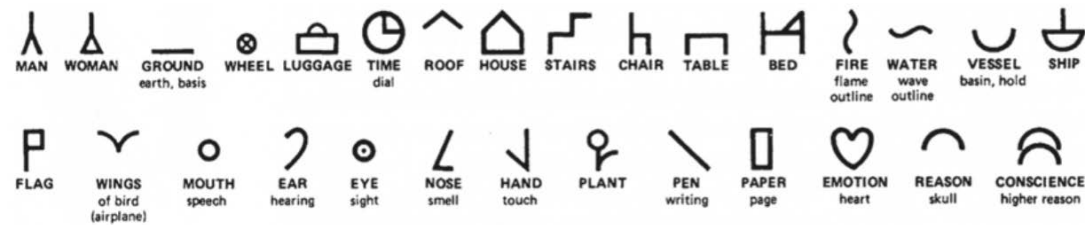


Fig 1. Basic Blissymbols

Based on these symbols, which are called “building blocks”, users can build a deeper meaning with the combination of building blocks. For example:

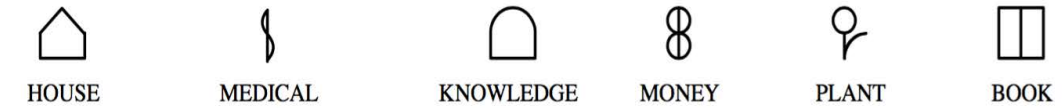


Fig 2. Blissymbolic Building Blocks

With various combinations of these building blocks, a more direct indication is developed. These kind of characters are called ideographic. Ideograph derives from Greek words meaning “drawing an idea.” Users use pictographic blissymbols to compose and form an ideographic character to illustrate their ideas.

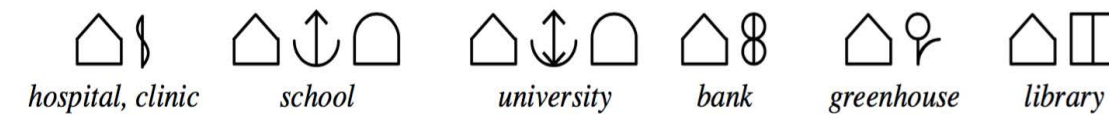


Fig 3 Ideographic Blissymbols

The samples shown above, are ideographs composite with two symbols side by side, where they are still separate from each other. However, there is another set of Blissymbols that use the similar method but symbols are formed within each other.

Composite Bliss-characters are unique characters in which two or more Bliss-characters have been superimposed (merged) or superposed (one above the other) to represent a new meaning. (Bliss-rules, p.8)

Examples of Bliss-characters with concrete meanings:



Fig 4. Blissymbols with Concrete Meanings

Examples of Bliss-characters with abstract meanings:

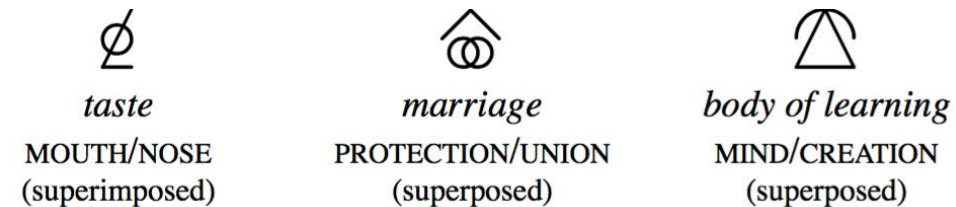


Fig 5. Blissymbols with Abstract Meanings

Since there is a wide range of possibility one can do with Blissymbols, it has the strength of expressing sophisticated thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Bliss built an effective language system that is quick and easy to learn.

Even though his intention of this system didn't start in the way he aimed, the application of Blissymbol grew into another branch. The first application was used as the communication for children with physical disabilities through an interdisciplinary team led by Shirley McNaughton at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre in 1971. The people who have been using the Blissymbols mostly are people with severe speech and physical impairments in Western and European countries. Though the number of persons who use Blissymbols as their alternative form of communication is quite small, they are currently spreading all around the world and benefit significantly from the Internet.

The Blissymbolics Communication International (BCI) – represents the latest set of formally approved Blissymbols that appear in Bliss dictionaries. The BCI standard is based on and derived from Charles K. Bliss' work Semantography (1949). BCI develops the Blissymbol system with the needs of its users, which include

national, cultural and developmental differences; maintenance of the logic of the system; maintenance of Blissymbolics as a multicultural language; and sensitivity to the practical and pragmatic needs for communication.

(Blissymbolics Communication International 2017)

Although Blissymbol is a very effective non-verbal communication system. With the revolution of new technology, a new system spread rapidly throughout the world. Almost everyone in our current society has at least one electronic device that can be used to communicate with another device. Many of our communication with others is not face-to-face meetings, but turned into computer-mediated communication. With that said, within the recent years, many smartphone's message application use stickers, emoticons, as an alternative system to communicate.

“The goal of non-verbal cues is to convey emotional messages, and the goal of verbal cues is to communicate ideas.” (Lo, 2008) Just like it sounds, emoticon means an emotional icon. It substitutes the lack of emotion of text message. When the tone of voice cannot be transmitted through text message, having emoticons that show the visual expression of what you want to say eliminate the chance of confusion. The most well-known message applications use and develop their own emoticons are LINE, Kakaotalk, and WeChat. They created characters that do exaggerated actions to demonstrate what the senders' emotions are like.



Fig 6. Emoticon Characters from LINE



Fig 7. Emoticon Characters from Kakao Talk

They started off as just a simple sticker that the sender can post in the chatroom, but the popularity of emoticons skyrocketed, companies started to make their emoticons with voice and motion. They began to have online store where users can purchase stickers, and also added the function that users can send sticker as a gift to their friends. Emoticons is not just an alternative communication system, but it is part of how people communicate now. Research shows that people have a better understanding of the message when it speaks with an emoticon. “Emoticons allow receivers to correctly understand the level and direction of emotion, attitude, and attention expression.” (Lo, 2008) Express and communicate through visual language has become an irreplaceable part of our everyday dialogue now.

As mentioned earlier, each language contains its cultural memory and history. For language learners that might not have the cultural memory with the language and knowledge of its history, one of the ways to make it up is to have an immersive experiment with the culture. Experience plays an important role in our learning development. A couple years ago, I got invited by a friend to a small exhibition at Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study at Harvard University. It was a really small exhibition, indeed there were only two pieces of works in display. It only had two pieces, but this exhibition has totally changed my view on the way we communicate, express, and experience through arts.

The exhibition is about teamLab, it is a Japanese artist-collective company that use digital media to connect the relationships among people, create a body immersive art experience, and brings viewer’s collaboration into their artworks.

Their practice, which ingeniously integrates high technology with elements of Japanese art and history, is the result of a diversity of specialists and professionals from various fields whose self-professed aim is to ‘achieve a balance between art, science, technology and creativity’, expressing a sensibility unique to contemporary life.

(Kelty, 2016)



Fig 8. *Floating Flower Garden* by teamLab



Fig 9. *Crystal Universe* by teamLab

Toshiyuki Inoko, the founder of the company, said that in one of his interviews, “I decided to focus on expanding the definition of art by using digital technology and changing people’s minds by art...” Inoko established teamLab with his friends when he was studying in Mathematical Engineering and Information Physics at University of Tokyo, and got his bachelor’s degree at the school in 2001. When people ask how he started the company, he referred back to early 2000s, when the internet had just emerged, and he already saw its potential in doing something truly innovative.



Fig 10. *Koi Pond* by teamLab

teamLab is an ultra-technological group consisting of 350 specialists from various backgrounds including engineers, programmers, CG animators, designers, editors and architects. Inoko wants teamLab to be a place where everyone can create and learn something new through experimentation and collaboration, therefore, he includes the word “Lab” in the company’s name. With the expertise of these talented people from various fields, teamLab has been producing proactive installation that inspire people’s mind and define new ways of how viewers can interact with arts. teamLab has been creating large scale of installations that form an immersive nature environment with Japanese aesthetic for viewers to interact with.

Many works from teamLab are educative, interactive, and aesthetically pleasing. Story of the time when the Gods First Descended is one that impressed me the most. It’s the only teamLab installation that I have experienced in person, and it also later becomes the inspiration of The Roots, one of my designed teaching materials. Story of the time when the Gods First Descended is an interactive animation installation. In most ancient cultures, people believed everything has its own guardian gods and goddesses, from the sun, the moon, and the star to the rocks, waterfalls, and the tree. Gods are everywhere. Many cultures believed their pictographs are tools for them to communicate with gods. The installation is a 360-degree projection with sound that creates a totally immersive environment. When viewers enter the room, they are surrounded by images, pictographs and nature sounds. If viewers touch a pictograph on the walls, it will transform into the god and if you touch the god, the god will move according to its physical characteristics and behavior. Then it starts the chain reaction that alter the whole scene and change the relationships with other gods.

The most unique thing about teamLab’s installation is based on an algorithm that their programmers developed, none of the moments in the animation will happen twice. So each visitor has a unique and personal experience with the artwork.

Besides installation like Story of the time when the Gods First Descended, where sensor is use to create the interaction, there is another installation that use smartphone as a media for interaction. The most famous and well-known piece from teamLab is Crystal Universe, which is an interactive installation of light sculpture. The installation uses particles of LED lights that are controlled by viewers using their smartphones to select images via a teamLab developed application. The image will show in the style of Pointillist painting with the particles of light forming a sculpture. Since the installation interacts with smartphones, the light sculpture can detect where the signals sent from, and form the light sculpture near the signal’s source. Therefore, the installation is a compilation of various light sculpture generated by different viewers and thus created an environment with the appearance of crystal universe.

teamLab started off by only exhibiting in the nearby countries. With the innovative and creative artworks, they are now working with PACE gallery and exhibited all around the world. teamLab success is not only because its groundbreaking art installations but also that all of its installations are constantly altering by the viewers, and creating a customize experience that can never be the same to two viewers, which I consider very true to life. Even if two persons are in the same space, seeing, hearing, listening and touching the same thing, their experiences will still not be the same, because of their thinking processes and backgrounds.



Fig 11. *Story of the time when the Gods First Descended* by teamLab

The way we express and communicate is constantly changing because our experience and life keeps adding new ideas to our thoughts. Learning a new language is like learning a new way of thinking, because of the words you choose to represent your ideas. So to excel in a language is not to use it like a native, but to use the word that is the best statement of your thoughts.

CHAPTER FOUR

**A DESIGNER'S ARTS-INTEGRATED
PEDAGOGY MATERIALS**

“Sometimes the last missing piece in our language learning is knowing the roots of the language.”

We are all language learners. We constantly being inform new semiotics in our daily life. Earth-tone colors present a sense of mature; whereas the vibrant colors present energetic sense. That is the language of color. Siren sound signify alert. The sound of ocean often indicates peace and calm. That is the language of sound. Even though, people have slightly different perspectives on what color and sound make them feel, the impact on how much semiotics language we use and learn everyday can not be underestimated. Hence I included visual semiotics language in my designed teaching materials to enrich users’ memory of the content.

Since the beginning of my teaching career, I have been making small teaching materials that goes along with class. Some materials are just as simple as flash cards; some are games that require student’s physical activity. All the materials are hope to serve as additional supports to enhance students’ learning. Since most of my teaching subjects have been English, Chinese, art and crafts of traditional Chinese culture; I began to see the need of students for more art-integrated teaching materials to help them understand the content. I am starting to recognized many language learners are lacking the experience of creating culture memory with the language, so I designed two projects that hope to generate learners’ personal cultural memory to the language. These two projects came from using my past experiences, thinking about the future students, and solving problems either I was asked or I faced.

All the designed teaching materials are designed to accommodate with educators’ instructions, therefore, I encourage educators to develop their own teaching materials.

The Roots, and Last Piece of Puzzle are projects that both answering to specific questions and targeting toward specific groups of language learners. The following of this chapter is a documentary of how I started from the questions to the end products.

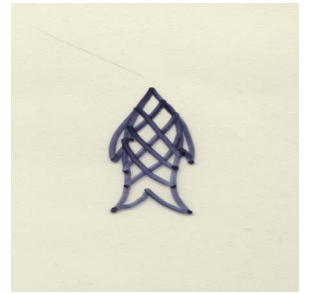
THE ROOTS (FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE LEARNERS)

One of the questions that I often was asked by my students is why is Chinese characters so hard to memorize? When I first heard that question, I astounded, because Chinese characters are like pictograms to me. Since Chinese characters had a long history and they went through a long process of transformation, the form of characters are not the same as how they used to be. One thing to remember is the fundamental method of creating Chinese characters is hieroglyph. Therefore, just like how English words are formed with the alphabets, most Chinese characters are also formed with the root-characters. In The Roots, I picked fifteen root-characters that I considered are used the most in characters' combination.

Character	日	月	水	火	木	山	雨	魚
pronunciation	ri\	yue\	shui\	huo\	mu\	shan-	yu\	yu\
meaning	sun	moon	water	fire	wood	mountain	the rain	fish
	糸	門	米	車	竹	心	草	
	mi\	men\	mi\	che-	zhu\	xin-	cao\	
	yarn	door	uncooked rice	car	bamboo	heart	grass	

The Roots is an interactive teaching material, that its interaction springs from the motion of using flash cards. Each root is a square pocket that contains three slides of characters. One side of the square pocket has an illustration representing the character, and the other side has the English translation and pronunciation. The three slides are the three stages of how this particular character evolve through time. First slide is oracle bone script; it is dated back to Shang Dynasty. (c.16th-11th Century B.C.) The oracle bone script is considered the origin of Chinese character. Second slide is seal script from Qin Dynasty. (c. 210 B.C.) The reason I chose to use seal script is because it was the first unified character of China. After Shang Dynasty, many countries aroused and developed their own language system. China became chaotic with wars between small countries for a long time. Then Emperor Qin came along, unified China, and united the trade and communication, currency and language. Third slide is the regular script, which is modernize traditional Chinese character that we use now.

The educator teaches the transformation and the history of each character to the students, and they use The Roots as a tool to enhance their memory of the character. The pocket at the back is designed to hold other slides when the user just wants to see one slide. The Roots is designed to target the beginners in Chinese language learning. It is to hope through the motion of interchange three slides and see the transformation of a character from image to what it is now, users will create a personal cultural memory toward the character.



Fish Oracle Bone Script



Fish Seal Script



Fish Modernized Traditional Character



Fish Illustration with Character

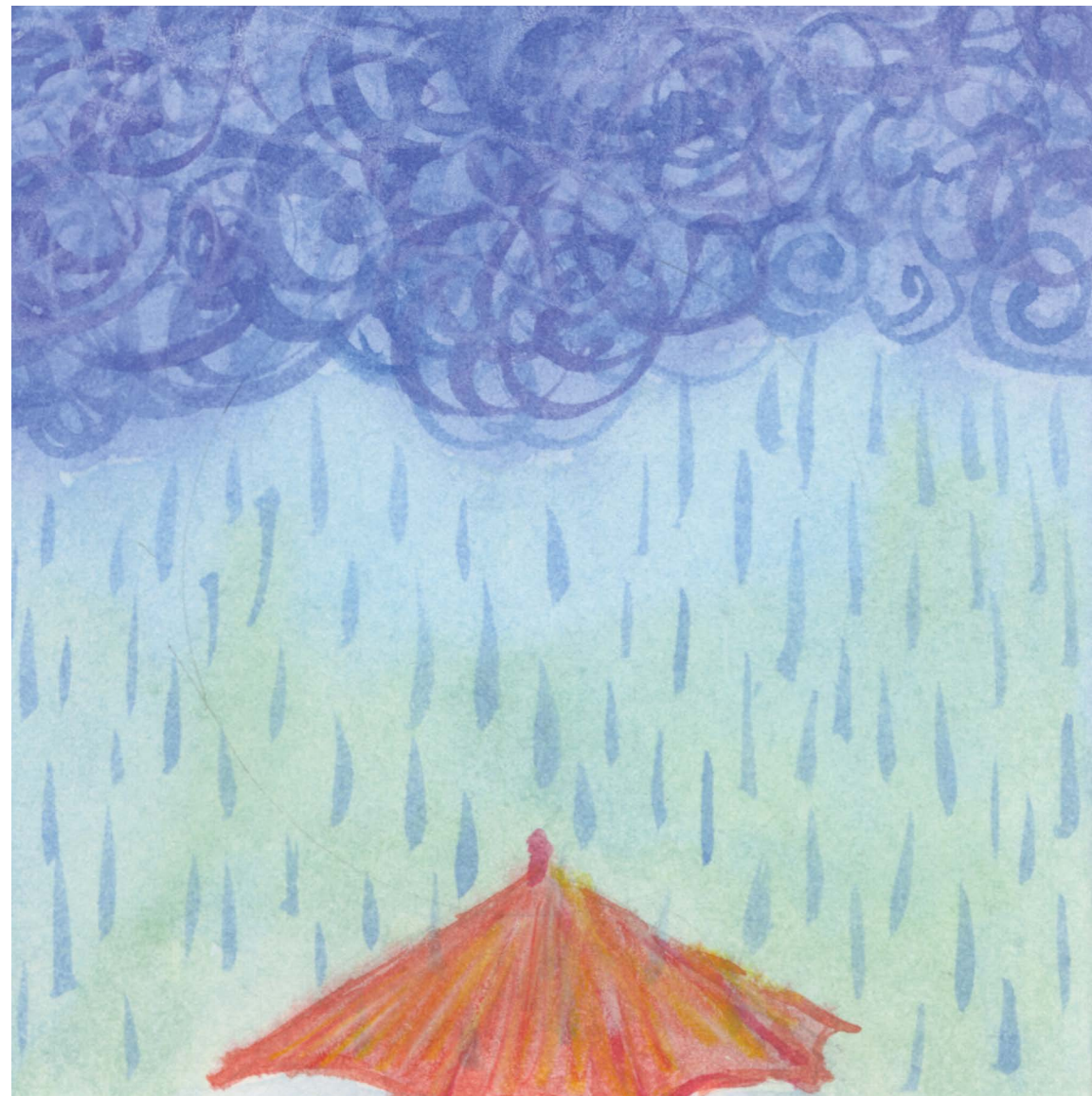
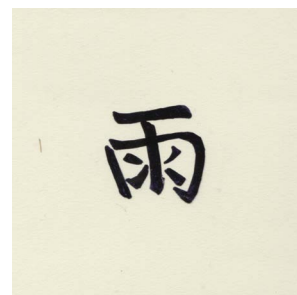
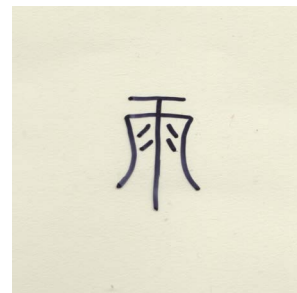
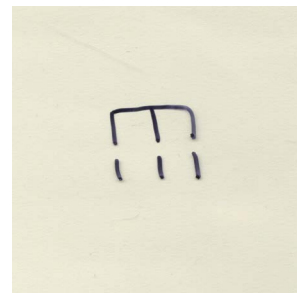


[yuˊ]

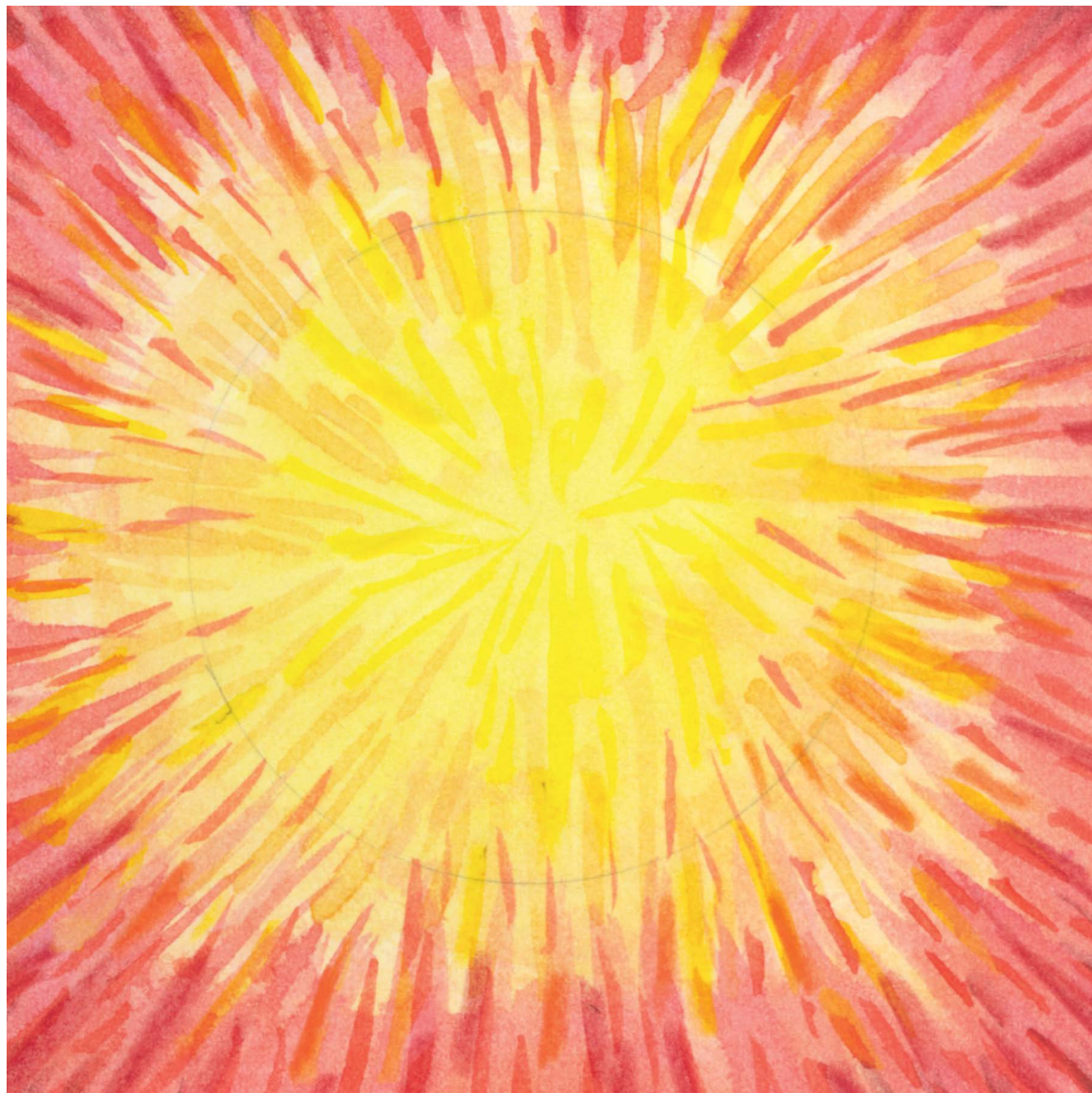
Fish



The Rain

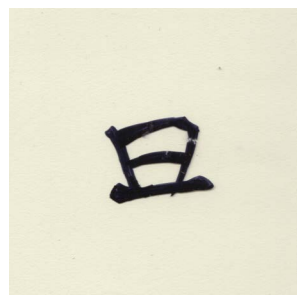
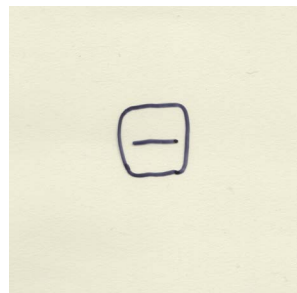
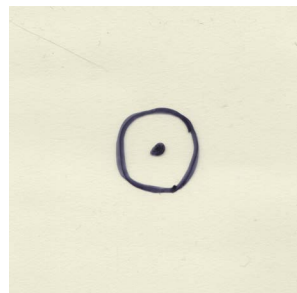


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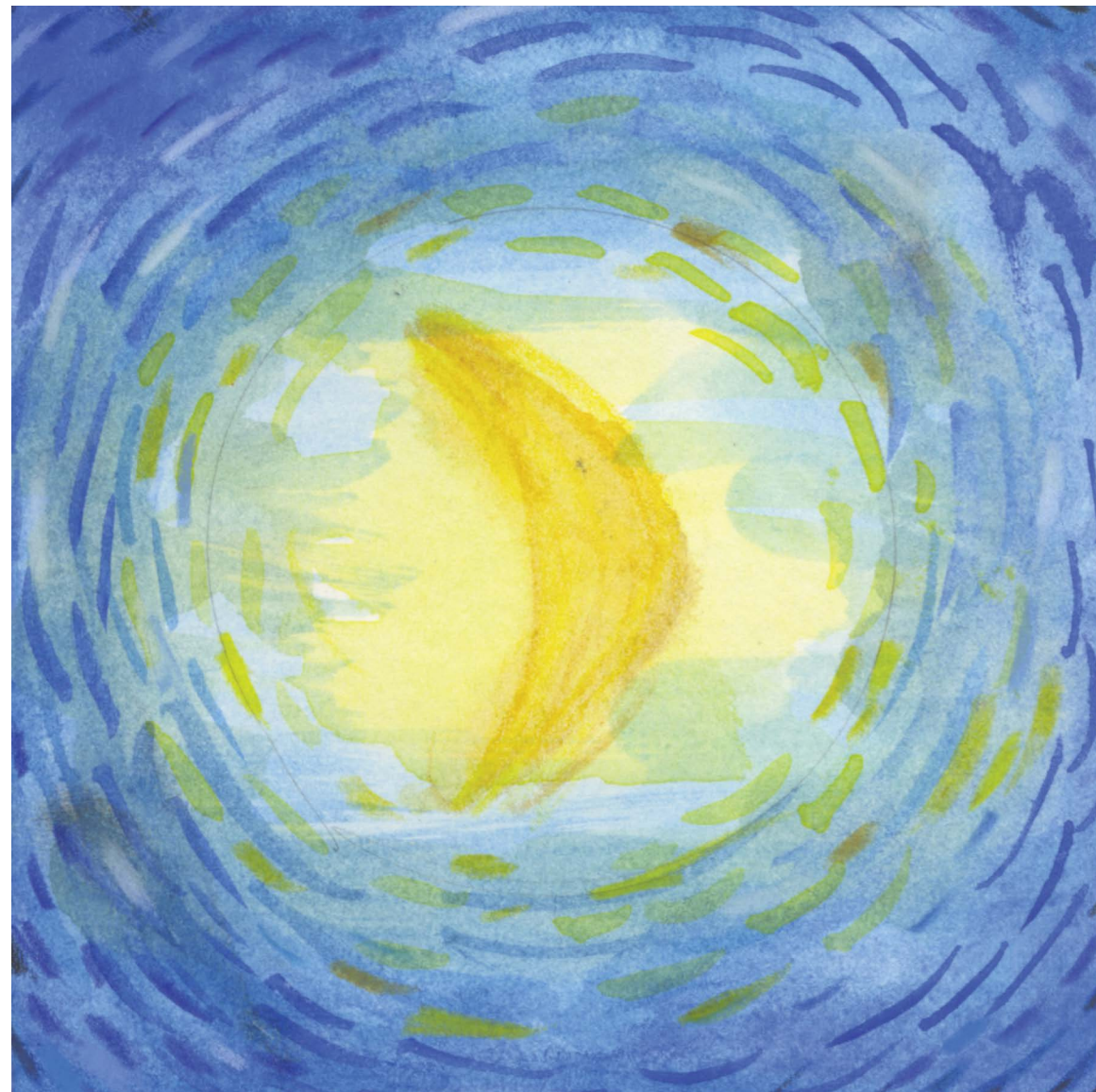
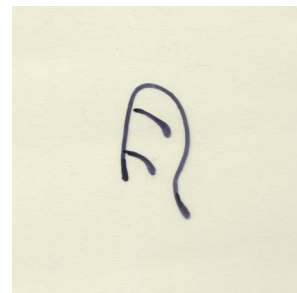
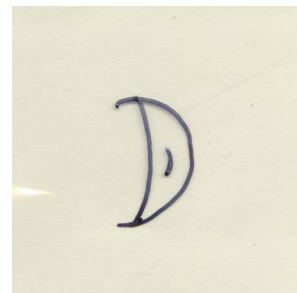


[ri˨˩]

Sun



Moon

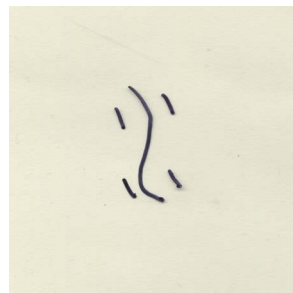


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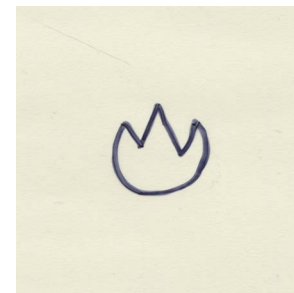


[shuiˊ]

Water



Fire

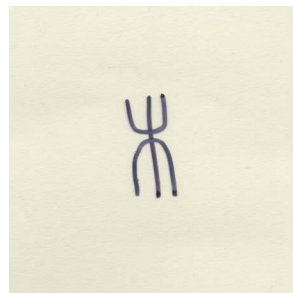
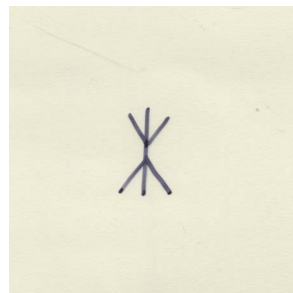


[huoˊ]

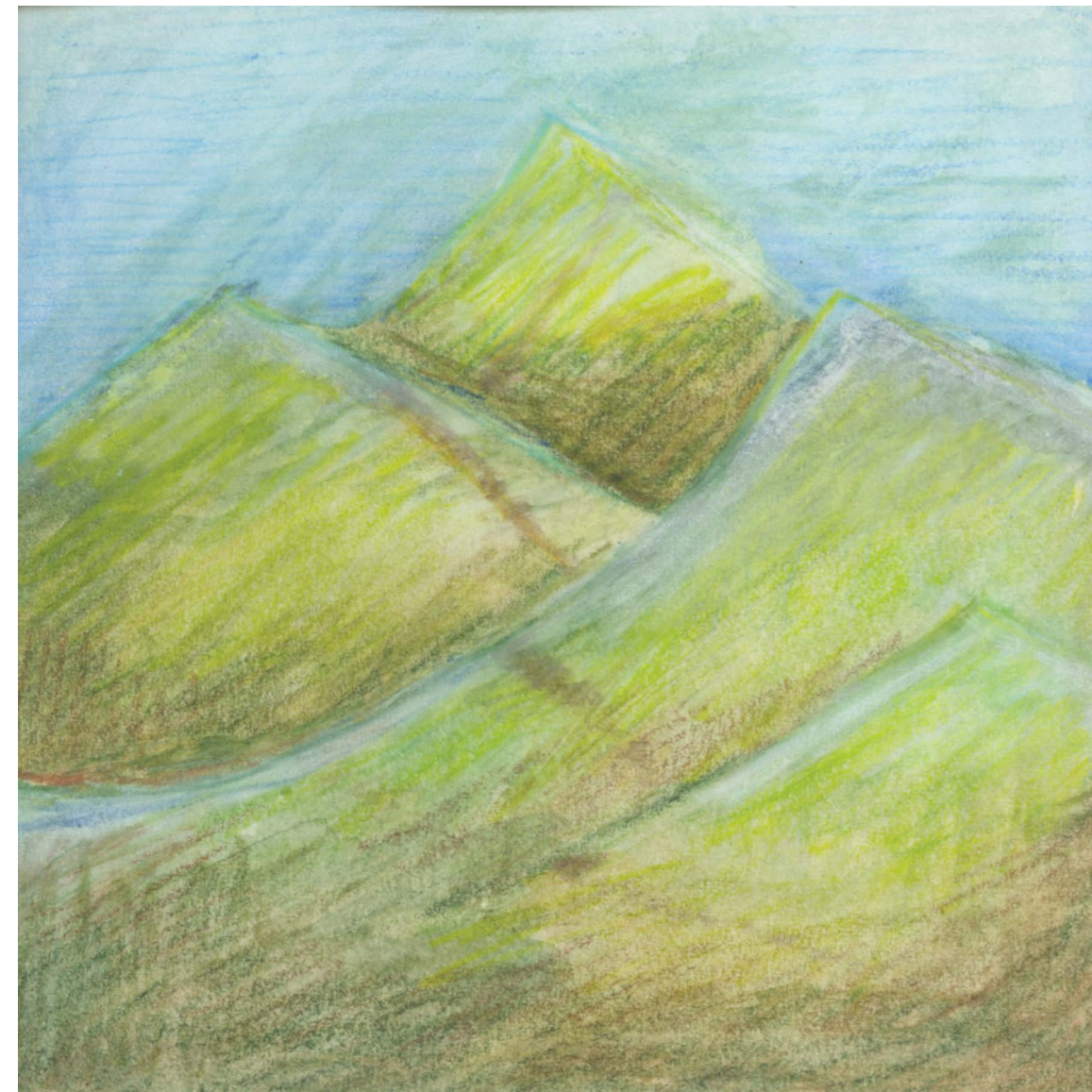
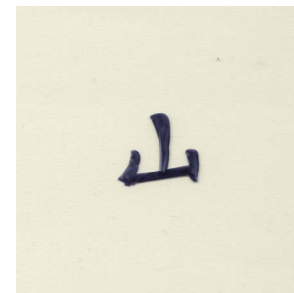
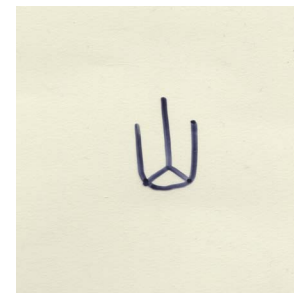


[mu˘]

Wood



Mountain

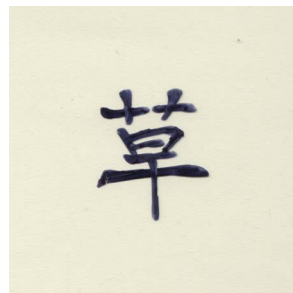
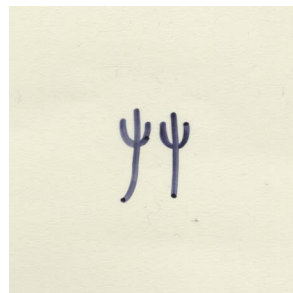
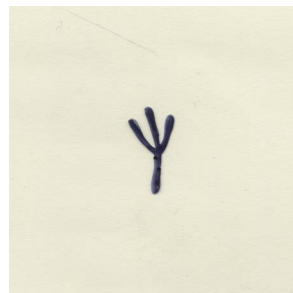


[shan-]

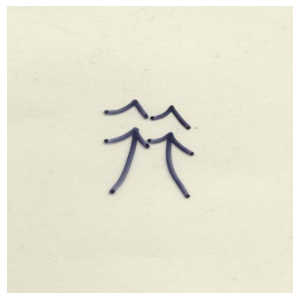


[caoˊ]

Grass



Bamboo



[zhuˊ]

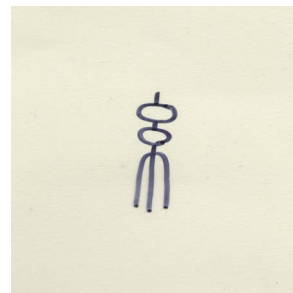
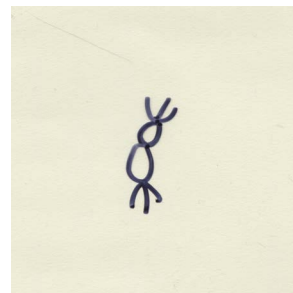


[mi̇]

Rice (uncooked)



Yarn

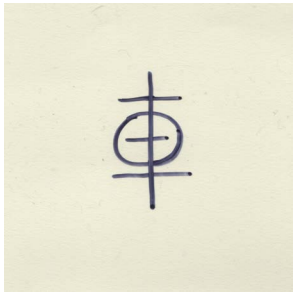
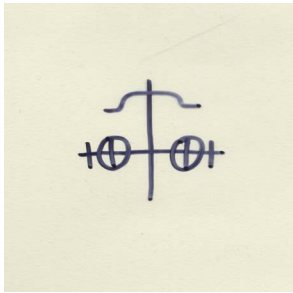


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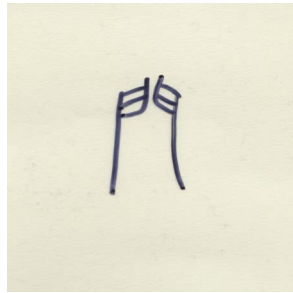
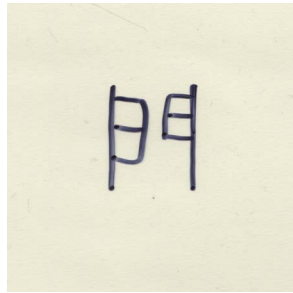


[che-]

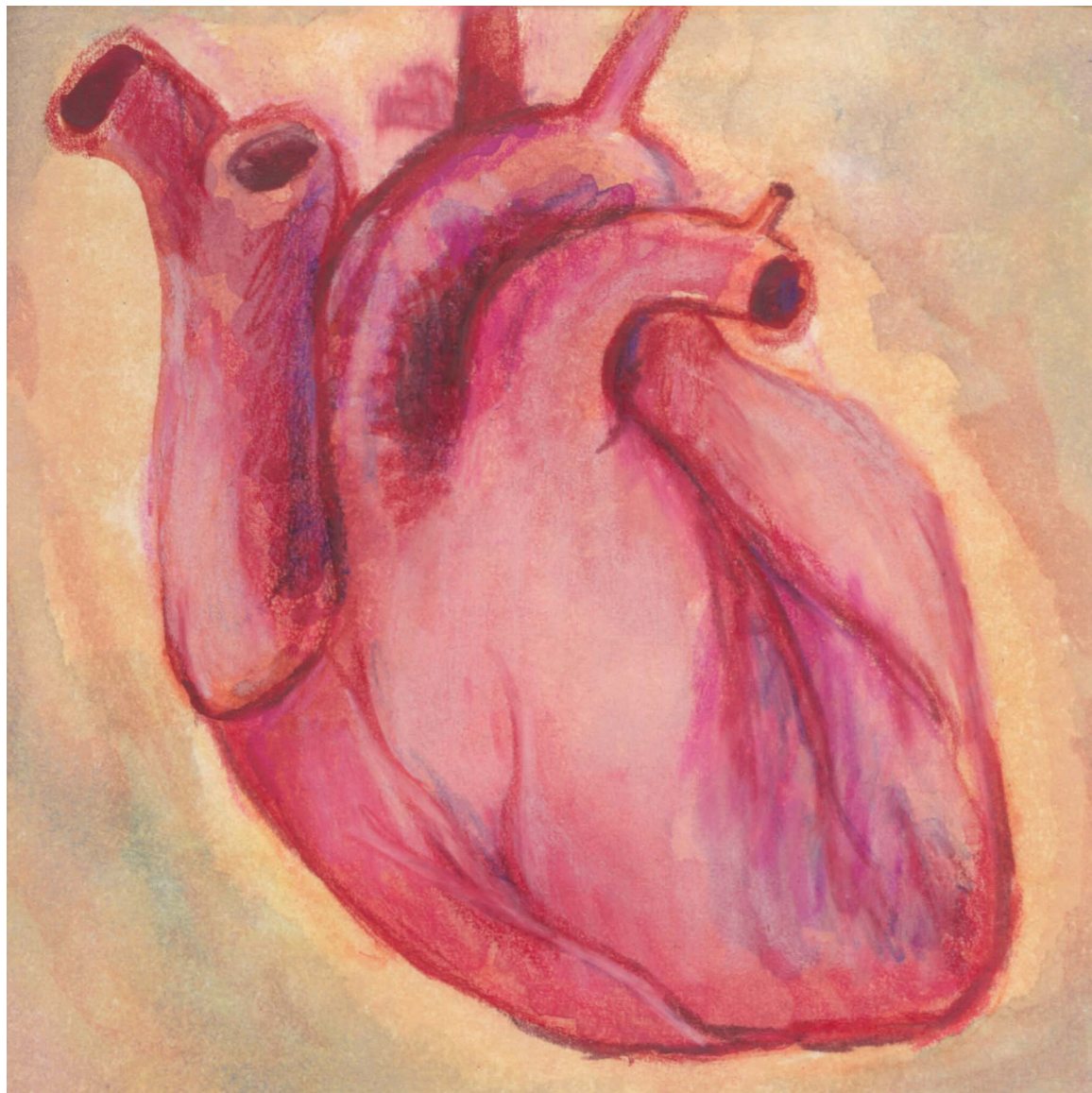
Car



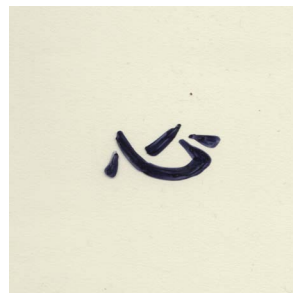
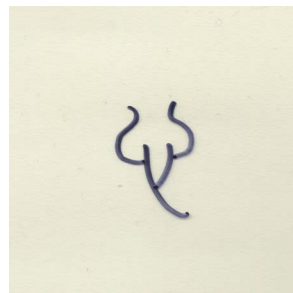
Door



[men-]



Heart



[xin-]

LAST PIECE OF PUZZLE (FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS)

I put in more effort as an English language learner than as a Chinese language learner. Chinese is my first language, so a lot of learning just comes natural to me from the environment that I grew up with. Then when I moved to U.S., I spent tremendous effort into catching up my English level to fit in school. After couple years, I started to feel comfortable with communicating in English, but there's still something that make me sound different. I realized that it was the idiom. Idiom is expression through a compilation of words that instead of its literal meanings, it means something else. For example: ring a bell means somebody has mentioned something that sounds familiar to you or perhaps you have heard it before. I didn't study American idiom when I learned English back in Taiwan, so it took me a while to get to know them. I designed Last Piece of Puzzle for intermediate English language learners that want to learn about American idiom. I chose fifteen idioms that I think is used the most common in life.

Last Piece of Puzzle is an interactive teaching material, that has the feature of flash cards and puzzle. Each idiom set contains a piece of circle with four pieces of puzzle. The circle piece is the base of the puzzle, one side has the idiom and its meaning engraved, and another side has a small circular piece that provide the hint of the puzzle. Because this teaching material is to enhance learners' memory, learners would have learned more than one idiom prior of using this material. So puzzle of idiom should mix with other puzzles, and based on the visual hint, learners will construct the puzzle. After the construction is complete, the image is a designer's visual interpretation of the idiom. Just like The Roots, Last Piece of Puzzle is designed for users to create a personal cultural memory with the idiom, and better their communication in English.





RING A BELL

Somebody has mentioned something that sounds familiar to you or perhaps you have heard it before.

GET YOUR HEAD AROUND IT

To understand something.



BLEW ME AWAY

When you are extremely impressed by something.



NO-BRAINER

An easy decision.



PIECE OF CAKE

When something is extremely easy to do.



BREAK A LEG

To wish a performer "good luck" in an ironic way, mostly used in theatre.

UP IN THE AIR

Things are uncertain or unsure; definite plans have not been made yet.



AS A RULE OF THUMB

It is a general unwritten rule for what is being discuss.



FOR CRYING OUT LOUD

To express one's irritation or impatience.

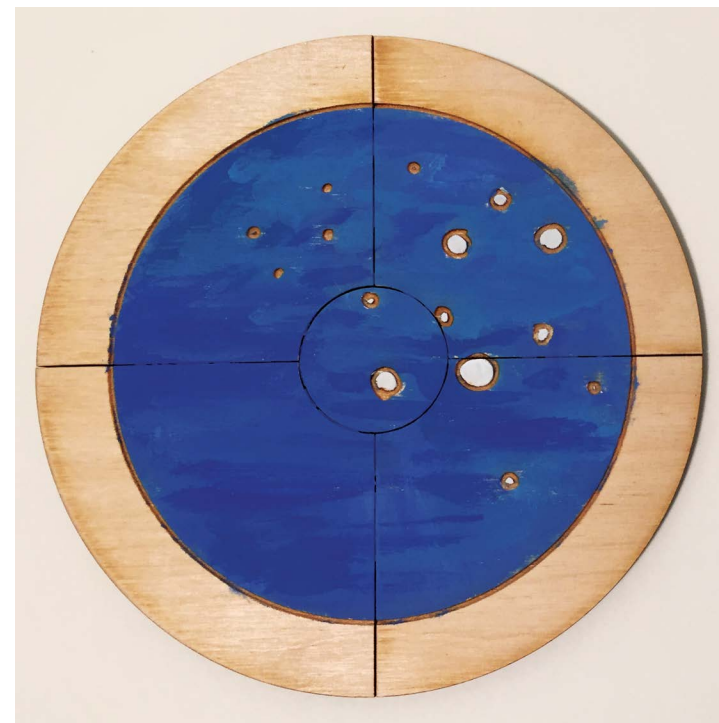


COST AN ARM AND A LEG

When something is very expensive.

**TAKE WHAT SOMEONE SAYS
WITH A PINCH OF SALT**

Regard something as exaggerated,
or only believe a part of something.



ONCE IN A BLUE MOON

When something rarely ever happens.



TO TWIST SOMEONE'S ARM

Someone has done a great job of convincing you to do something you might not have wanted to do.

A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

A way of asking what someone is thinking.



CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Cannot judge something based on its appearance.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

“Now the key of creative thinking is in my hand, I have the power to unlock challenges that lay in front of me.”

It is because of all these stories and experiences that I have heard and been through, helped me to grow and inform my creative thinking thus, lead toward my creative practices. The purpose of this thesis is not only for me to look back of how my art and creative practices come to the place it is at now. But it hopes to encourage all the teachers out there, whether you are language teachers, math/science teachers, or PE teachers. This is to all the educators: we are the people that know our students' abilities and needs the best, so instead of using an existing teaching materials as it is, perhaps we can alternate some parts and make it fit the students' need, or even better, to develop our own teaching materials.

For my time in Rhode Island School of Design, I have been taking classes that educate me to see languages in various perspectives. For example, the Studio Language class taught me the art of translation. While the beauty of the original text often loses within direct translation is inevitable, the translator often finds a way to use appropriate yet different words in the translating language to create the same essence of the original text. The Design Education class taught me the importance on use of language when inspire students using creative thinking.

The Type in Motion class taught me to focus on the form of each characters of language. All of these classes informed me a great deal about all kinds of languages, and thus motivated me to create The Roots, and Last Piece of Puzzle.

There is a Chinese idiom said, when you teach; you learn. In an art-integrated class, when teacher and students are using their creative thinking skills, both are educating each other about the various aspects of the subject, in response to that, they are both learning. I went through diverse types of school, from experimental school, traditional Taiwanese school, American public school, to art school. Each school, even the one that didn't teach art, has planted seeds in my garden of knowledge, and they all grew into my tree of creative thinking. This research is for all the creative thinkers that are also language educators and learners.

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