

**VISUAL NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN
DELIVERING VISUAL EXPERIENCE: A CASE
STUDY OF JIMMY LIAO'S PICTUREBOOK**

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by

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**TEKNIK- TEKNIK VISUAL NARATIF DALAM PENYAMPAIAN
PENGALAMAN VISUAL: KAJIAN KES BUKU BERGAMBAR JIMMY
LIAO**

ABSTRAK

Visual naratif adalah subgenre kajian visual dan visual naratif telah lama wujud sebagai satu bentuk hiburan. Biasanya, visual naratif dirujuk dengan istilah yang lebih khusus seperti animasi, filem, komik dan buku bergambar. Dalam usaha kerajaan Malaysia membuat pelaburan dalam industri kandungan kreatif, usaha menaikkan taraf industri kreatif harus disokong oleh pelbagai kajian dalam visual naratif. Sebagai langkah untuk memahami dan mendalami pengetahuan visual naratif, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menangani kekurangan dokumentasi mengenali teknik dalam visual naratif statik. Dalam kajian ini, visual naratif Jimmy Liao dipilih sebagai bahan kajian kes. Liao merupakan pengarang terkenal buku bergambar. Beliau dipilih kerana karya beliau mendapat sambutan baik di persada antarabangsa dan status perintis karya beliau dalam bidang visual di Taiwan. Kajian ini mempunyai tiga objektif. Kajian ini bertujuan menentukan fungsi utama visual (dalam interaksi dengan teks) dalam penyampaian pengalaman naratif visual. Tujuan kedua adalah untuk menyelidik teknik-teknik visual naratif yang berkesan dalam menyampaikan pengalaman naratif. Tujuan kajian juga termasuk membuat perbandingan teknik-teknik visual naratif yang digunakan oleh Jimmy Liao dengan pengkarya tempatan, *The Farm*. Analisis data dilakukan dengan berpanduan kerangka teori yang merangkumi beberapa teori seperti metafungsi bahasa dalam multimodaliti yang dicadangkan oleh Halliday, idea mengenali hubungan antara visual dengan perkataan yang diselidik oleh Nikolajeva dan Scott, kandungan dan

strategi yang diterangkan oleh Iser, dan pengubahsuaian konsep naratologi yang dibentang oleh Wolf. Kajian ini dilakukan dalam empat (4) peringkat. Dalam peringkat pertama ulasan kesusasteraan digunakan untuk memahami isu-isu perkembangan visual naratif. Peringkat seterusnya adalah kajian kandungan naratif dengan menggunakan kaedah analisis teks dari aspek fungsi perwakilan, interpersonal dan komposisi. Langkah yang seterusnya adalah menjalankan analisis teks dalam keadaan dan kesan naratif dengan mengenal pasti *narratemes* dalam naratif tersebut. Akhirnya, kajian membuat perbandingan antara teknik-teknik visual naratif yang digunakan oleh Jimmy Liao dalam karyanya, '*When the Moon Forgot*' dengan *The Farm* dalam karyanya, '*Floating*'. Hasil kajian menunjukkan fungsi utama visual dalam naratif adalah untuk menunjukkan aksi atau peristiwa yang berlaku. Namun, visual seharusnya memainkan fungsi tambahan seperti menggambarkan perspektif yang berlainan dengan perkataan. Teknik-teknik visual naratif yang berkesan mempunyai maklumat naratif dan mampu mencapai kriteria penilaian tertentu. Kajian juga mencadangkan ciri-ciri visual bersepadu yang sesuai dengan citra rasa pembaca moden.

VISUAL NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN DELIVERING VISUAL EXPERIENCE: A CASE STUDY OF JIMMY LIAO'S PICTUREBOOK

ABSTRACT

Visual narrative is the subgenre of visual studies and visual narratives have long existed as a form of entertainment. They are usually referred in more specific terms such as animation, films, comics and picturebooks. In the heat of Malaysia's government effort in investing in the creative content industry, the effort to raise the standards of the creative industry should be supported by research in visual narratives. In order to further understand the working of visual narratives, this research seeks to address the lack of documentation of techniques in static visual narratives. The research chooses to look into a case study of a visual narrative produced by Jimmy Liao. Liao is a renowned author of picturebooks. He is chosen because of the popularity of his work worldwide and the pioneer status of his works in the visual field in Taiwan. The research has three objectives. Firstly, the research aims to determine the main function of visuals (in the interaction with text) in delivering visual narrative experience. Secondly, the research seeks to investigate the robust visual narrative techniques in delivering narrative experience. Lastly, the research compares different visual narrative techniques used by Jimmy Liao to a local illustrator, The Farm. The analysis of data is conducted using a theoretical framework that includes theories such as Halliday's metafunctions of language in multimodality, Nikolajeva and Scott's idea of visual-word relationship, Iser's elaboration on content and strategies and Wolf's idea of narratological reconceptualization. The research is carried out in four (4) phases. Firstly, the research will look at the literature review to uncover issue regarding the development

in visual narratives. Then, textual analysis is carried out on narrative content in terms of representational, interpersonal and compositional functions. Next, textual analysis is carried out on narrative conditions and effects by identifying *narratemes* in the narrative. Lastly, the study compares between visual narrative techniques used in Jimmy's visual narratives, *When the Moon Forgot* and The Farm's visual narrative, *Floating*. The finding of the research shows the main function of the visuals in the narrative is to show the action or event happening. However, at best, visuals should have additional functions such as showing a new perspective different from the words. Robust visual narrative techniques have narrative aims and are able to fulfill certain evaluation criteria. The study also proposes characteristics of integrated visuals that are suited to the taste of modern readers.

Chapter 1 Background Study

1.0 Introduction

The world humans live in are built by stories. Stories are told as a form of communication and to transfer knowledge and information. Stories offer insight, values and new experience. Sometimes stories are given easily and many never realize the powerful impact and the magic of storytelling. A narration can bring the audience on a thrilling journey to a different time and space, or possess the power to read minds and reveals secrets, or be inspired by an heroic act (Miller, 2008). Human have been amused by this for centuries, and will continue to desire experiencing a world of real and imagined stories.

Herman (2007) stated:

Stories are accounts of what happened to particular people – and of what it was like for them to experience what happened – in particular circumstances and with specific consequences. Narrative, in other words is a basic human strategy for coming to terms with time, process and change. (p. 3)

Herman's statement indicates that stories might be a form of communication strategy to deliver experience. In the past, narrative may only be passed on interpersonally, through talking, writing or performing a ritual during festival, and myths spread within communities. Later advancement in printing services allows written materials to be produced and distributed easily. As technological advancement allows an abundance of ways to communicate and constantly receive information, narrative is also present in many difference forms. More recently, they were recorded on audiotape, film, or videotape (Miller, 2008). Now, broadcasting technologies allows mass communication through various media like radio, movies, films; the Internet and smart phones facilitate video calls, messaging apps and social

websites. The global population is in a state of constant communication. In all these forms of communication, narration is part of it, if not all of it.

The definition of narrative in itself is arguable in the context of social science research. There are several definitions such as “Somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose that something happened” (Phelan & J. Rabinowitz, 2012) and “ Narrative is a substitute for a general assumption, theory, or ideological stance without temporal organization” (Rimmon-Kenan, 2006). According to Mari-Laure Ryan, the narrative potential of life can be accounted for by the distinction between ‘being a narrative’ and ‘possessing narrativity’. Narrativity is present in speech, text and visuals, only in varying amount of degree. To be more precise, narrative should be taken as an aspect of text, experiences and action, which can evoke a responds from the audience (Hyvarinen, 2007).

Looking at narrative as rhetoric is more suitable with the research because of the study’s concern with communicating experience. Approaching narrative as a purposive communication event, the study is interested in the experience of narrative. The progression of narrative is the means the author uses to achieve his purpose (Phelan & J. Rabinowitz, 2012). In other words, the author uses certain techniques in storytelling, and this is precisely what the research wants to look into.

‘Visual Narrative’ (VN) is the sub-genre of Visual Studies. Although being greatly researched by scholars, the term is not established as a distinctive area of study, as researches are also carried out separately and not considered to be under a unified area of study (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). Narratives are thoroughly researched by scholars under the linguistic field, while visual semiotics is researched under arts and

design field. However, the increase in authors and readers has brought to innovation to vehicles and presentations of narratives, and eventually innovation of both fields brought to the creation and mass distribution of visual narratives.

The term “Visual Narrative” generally signifies a visual that tells a story, which three (3) elements are present:

- 1) Visual signifies – something that can be seen and observed by the human eye, something physical.
- 2) Story signifies – a series of happenings linked by causality, temporality or sequence or a system of occurrence.
- 3) Narrative signifies – the act of telling a story or the story itself or the order of presentation.

(Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010)



Figure 1.1: Example of Visual Narrative (Comic Strip from Cyanide and Happiness)

[<http://explosm.net/comics/2637/>]

The characteristic features of a visual narrative, (refer to Figure 1.1):

- 1) The presence of a story. The story in Figure 1.1 is between the boss and the worker.
- 2) The visual is constructed with the idea of communicating the story to the audience.

The argument between the characters is what the story tries to communicate in Figure 1.1.

- 3) There is a presence of actors/characters. There are two (2) characters in Figure 1.1 who are differentiated by status in the work place.
- 4) The visual narrative has a 'universe' of its own. The 'universe' in Figure 1.1 refers to an unrealistic workplace to exaggerate the action to create humour.
- 5) A visual narrative could be expressed on any medium. The medium in Figure 1.1 is in comic strips, posted digitally.

To avoid confusion with other visuals where a story can be imposed into them, visuals that are visual narrative must be:

- 1) Visuals where the story depicted is expected to be so well known that it does not require accompanying text.
- 2) Visual where the story accompanies it is in written or aural form.

(Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010)

The term visual narrative can also be any genres of visual storytelling. A visual narrative is communicated mainly through a visual media (Liden, 2014). One or many visual platforms such as photography, illustration, installation or video could be used. This tool can be enhanced with graphics, music, voice and other audio. Visual narrative as a means of storytelling allows a variety of approach in methodology and presentation. Visual narratives could be films, narrative painting, animation, pictorial narratives, sequential art, comics and narrative illustration (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). This can include photojournalism, photo essay, films, movies, art, television dramas, picture books, comic books and graphic novels (Liden, 2014). Visual narratives are, in short, visuals that tell stories. This can be done with or without text. **Figure 1.2** for example shows a visual narrative about a child standing up. It is a simple story and can be understood without text. Whilst **Figure**

1.3 shows a spread from ‘ Cinderella’ storybook, where the visuals produced to show the events, accompanied by text.



Figure 1.2: Example of a Photo essay

[<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/442126888387961034/>]

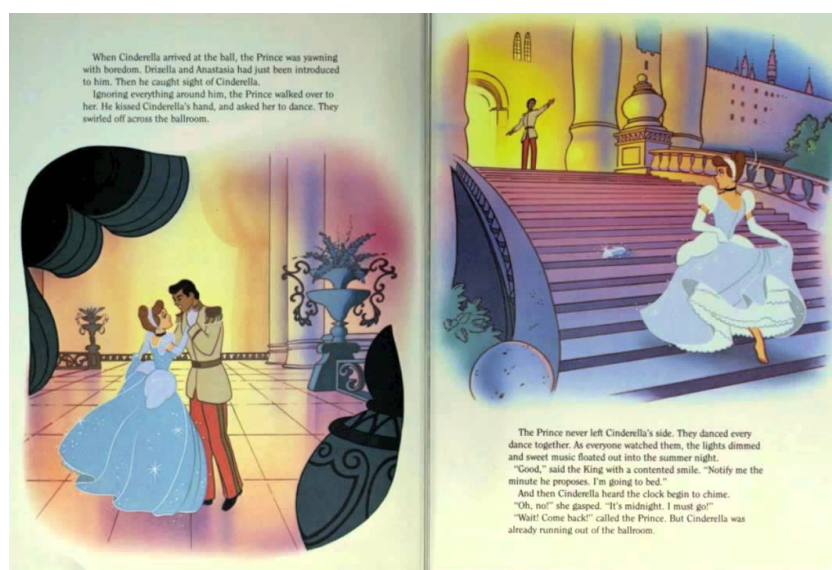


Figure 1.3: Cinderella children picturebook

[<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/hEeEyuevcS0/maxresdefault.jpg>]

Visual narratives were born from the desire to commemorate significant events and already exist by the end of prehistoric period (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). Primarily the visual narrative works as an aid to the viewer to visualise the way the event

happened. Visual narrative, in the past used to reach people who were illiterate, has a strong impact and has been used extensively (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). Visual narrative has its advantage in the capability to mimic the event, conditions, and characters in great detail. In the form of visuals it has a high reach-out rate. But visual narratives have a disadvantage. It requires the viewer to have a certain level of understanding towards culture and social practice where the visual narratives belong to make sense of it (Baldry, 2000).

There are two (2) types of very distinctive visual narratives, which are ‘arts of time’ and ‘arts of space’. ‘Arts of space’ are static or fixed images on an area of space (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). They are pictorial art and material image and are static and limited in extent, for example graphic novels. ‘Art of time’ are art with covers a period of time, it changes continually through time and therefore belongs to the order of temporal modification. The examples for ‘art of time’ are film and music.

The manner that its audience perceive images also distinguishes between the two. There is the difference between passive reception and active perceiving (Arnheim, 1969). While viewing a film the story unfolds in front of the viewer, but in case of comics the viewers are left to unfold the story themselves. Each successive frame of a movie is projected on exactly the same space while each frame of comics must occupy a different space. This two very different type of visual narrative is separated based on the nature of temporarily and the manner of viewing the visual narratives. We can assign the term ‘Dynamic Visual Narrative’ to the former and ‘Static Visual Narrative’ to the latter. In addition, the term ‘Interactive Visual Narrative’ is

assigned on the basis of extensive viewer interaction with the visual narrative (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010).

1.0.1 Types of Visual Narratives

According to Pimenta and Poovaiah, there are three (3) types of visual narratives: Static visual narrative, Dynamic Visual Narrative and Interactive Visual Narrative.

Distinguishing Characteristics	Static Visual Narrative	Dynamic Visual Narrative	Interactive Visual Narrative
Manner of unfolding of the story	Unfolds in Space	Extends in time	Extends in time with latent possibilities of unfolding in space
Visual appearance	Visual is fixed on the surface of the medium	Visuals are replaced in rapid succession at the same space	Visual appears to be fixed but can be replaced by visuals changing in rapid succession on trigger
Knowledge of the story	Viewers need to know prior knowledge of the story (visual accompanied by text)	The viewer does not need to know the story prior to viewing	Viewers may or may not need prior knowledge of the story and in some cases the viewer decides how the story moves forward
Visual and Viewer Interaction	The visual is fixed but the viewer (imagination) is mobile	The visuals move but the viewer is at a fixed location	Visual can be fixed or mobile, likewise the viewer can be fixed or moving or even take on the role of a character in the story
Speed of Viewing	The spectator can decide the speed of viewing	Speed of viewing predetermined by the creator	Sometimes viewer can determine the speed of viewing, at other times the speed is predetermined
Sequence of Viewing	The spectator can manipulate the sequence and the pace of viewing	The spectator has no control over the sequence or pace of viewing	The spectator can manipulate the sequence and the pace of viewing sometimes
Contemplation time	Viewer has ample contemplation time	Contemplation time restricted	Contemplation time can be at times ample and at times restricted
Perception of Movement in the	Movement results from active	Movement is due to the rapid change of	Movement can be caused by the active

Visual Narrative	participation of the viewer	visuals	participation of the viewer as well as the rapid change of visuals
Examples	Cave paintings, Comics, Graphic Novels, Picture Books, Narrative Scrolls, Narrative on Objects, Miniature paintings, Murals	Animation, Drama, Bioscope, Puppet Shows, Live Action Films.	Interactive story books, Interactive Games, iPad interactive book

Table 1.1: Types of visual narratives (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010, p. 43)

Static visual narratives, dynamic visual narratives and interactive visual narratives are very different from one another, and could never have visual narrative that can come under two (2) of the terms. In this way, when researches refer to any of the terms, researchers would be sure readers or professionals know exactly what the term refers to.

This research only deals with static visual narratives because of the research gap present in previous researches and limited time and resources. The term visual narratives will directly refer to static visual narrative as defined in the literature review above.

1.0.2 Definition of Specific Terms

Some terms may overlap in meaning and be confusing to associate. For more specific reference and to clear any ambiguity that maybe present in using these terms, it is important to define these terms here. Some of these terms that need to be clarify are as follows:

1) Sequential Art

Sequential Art is a collection of images and other visual elements such as text, presented in a sequence, to narrate a story (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010). Historically,

sequential art in the form of paintings may be merely successions of images without any text to clarify the narrative and the audience need to make their own inference.

Sequential art is the fundamental of an art form used in graphic storytelling or to communicate and share information. Comics are a good example of sequential art. Using juxtaposition of two images, illusion of time passing can be produced. This is often found in the visual language used in modern comic books. Linear sequence of images creates a sense of a succession of moments or temporal units (Cohn, 2010).

2) Storytelling

Storytelling is the art of portraying or expressing real or fictitious events in words, images, or sound, with the aim of entertainment, education, cultural preservation, and instilling values. Storytelling is a reinvention of human experience. Stories help people to see how others experience an event, and how others view the world. Telling a story is a communication activity (Marks, 2011).

3) Comics

Comics are one of the forms of visual narratives that are a hugely popular and economically available to common people. Comic books are serialized stories; most are relatively short, and tell the story of the book's heroes and heroines over a long period of time. There are usually many, many issues of a successful comic book, and the stories unfold over months and sometimes years (Kelly, 2014). Compared to orthodox and mainstream forms of art, the comical nature of manga, with its caricatures and exaggerated expressions, often represented the sentiments of common people (Chiba, 2011). Manga is a specific type of comic that is produced in Japan.

This research might turn to comics for historical reference purposes, but the research will not look at the techniques in comics as comics have developed a visual language

of their own, using techniques such as speech bubbles, panels, action lines and guilds of visual hierarchy. More importantly, the research will not select samples of comics to study although it is also a visual narrative.

4) Graphic Novels

Graphic Novels are longer works that stick to a plot to tell a single story, usually within a book length. Sometimes they can be a compilation of short comics or short stories published as a book. Plots in graphic novels can be more complex and intense, as stories don't have to be broken up over countless issues, and readers don't have to remember details for anywhere from months to years while reading. Manga is a type of graphic novel (Kelly, 2014). Graphic Novels uses the same visual language as comics, and they are often confused with each other. At 1964, Richard Kyle, American comic critic and magazine publisher, coins the term graphic novel. It was intended to distinguish high quality graphic novel in colour hardback albums from cheap newsprint comics (Gravett, 2005). In comparison, comics generally refer to periodicals and have more low quality printing, may contain different stories in a series, taking a more magazine-like format.

5) Picturebooks

Picturebooks are books with narratives that depend mainly on pictures to support the storytelling process. It normally comprises sequential pictures, and can be accompanied by text. Usually, picturebooks use a combination of visuals and text to communicate. The union of text and art in picturebooks are important.

Picturebooks are usually produced to suit the needs of younger readers, especially toddlers and children. However, in the recent years picturebooks genre increases and its readers expand to include adults (Osborn, 2001) These books can narrate from the point of view of an adult, offering imaginative scenes, and advance linguistic

techniques such as metaphor, conceptual and abstract text to create either humorous or emotionally smoothing effect for adult readers. The research will select samples of visual narrative in the form of picturebooks to study.

1.0.3 History of Visual Narrative

Visual narratives first appear as painted stories in ancient Egypt and developed into representative single images, which are hieroglyphs (Perry, 2014). In ancient Greek and Japan, visual narratives are used by artist in artworks and scrolls to document important events. The invention of the printing press allows visual narratives to be reproduced and distributed to the mass.

A Swiss professor, Rodolphe Topffer, created *The story of Mr Wooden Head*, the first modern comic in the early 1800s (Perry, 2014). During the 19th and 20th centuries, comic strips were used to attract more readers in newspapers. After that, Winsor McCay created *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and this brings comics to a Renaissance that includes popular titles such as Popeye, Mutt and Jeff And Krazy Kat (Perry, 2014). In the 1930's comics from Europe including the Belgian classic, *Tintin*, came to America. Comic artists start to create comic in a format of a book with a themes such as adventures. *Superman* became popular during World War II. After the war, Comics Code was imposed but superhero comics became a trend.

In Japan, Animal scroll painting by Toba Sojo in the 11th century remains an inspiration in the invention of modern manga (Perry, 2014). Later, when the western comics came to Japan, artist Rakuten Kitazawa combine more western style in his work. After the war, in 1948, Akobon or 'red books' is introduced (Perry, 2014).

Osamu Tezuka inspired by Disney animation later established the term ‘manga’ when he created *Shin Takarajima* (New Treasure Island) in 1947 (Ebonne, 2014). Tezuka developed his visual story-telling techniques, applying elements of films, and expanding the length of comics to hundreds pages. Since then, the Japanese market expanded its range to cover works in many genres, from teenage love story to adult fantasies.

Japanese manga is typically published in large anthologies, following the style created by Tezuka, and the narrations have long been used as sources for adaptation into animated film, referred to as ‘anime’. Manga in Japan is typically accompanied by a production of anime and many creators work in both forms simultaneously, leading to an intrinsic linking of the two forms.

Japan has long realised the potential of comics to carry more mature themes and invested in the medium until manga became a common entertainment in Japan (Perry, 2014).

1.0.4 History of picturebooks

The first modern picture book was popularly cited as the works of illustrator Randolph Caldecott (Popova, 2012). He started using images for storytelling rather than mere decorations. His work includes representations of nursery rhythms, songs, and comic poems. He illustrated a variety of literature such as fiction, fables and novels. His works include classic rhymes such as “Hey Diddle Diddle”, “The Queen of Hearts,” and “The House that Jack Built” (Encyclopedia of World Biography ,

2004; Popova, 2012). Caldecott's picture books are often seen as an integration of art, text and design. His works are gaiety and animated.

Evidently, in the earlier days, picture book first emerge in Europe and then came to Japan. In Japan, After World War II, Japanese publishers, writers and librarians went to USA and Britain to study children's books. Many of them then translated English picture books into Japanese and contributed to establishing public libraries in Japan. (Yoda, 2012). After that, picture books begin to spread to other countries, such as China, Korea and South East Asia.

1.1 Background Study

Creative industries typically refer to the socio-economic potential of activities that trade with creativity, knowledge and information (What are Creative Industries and Creative Economy, 2008-2011). Governments worldwide are increasingly recognizing the importance of creative industry as a provider of jobs, wealth and cultural engagement. Creative industries integrate arts, culture, business and technology, and are important in building intangible social values in a society. The similarity of these activities is the fact that they all trade with creative assets in the form of intellectual property; the framework through which creativity translates into economic value. (What are Creative Industries and Creative Economy, 2008-2011)

The definition of the creative industries in United Kingdom for example includes thirteen sectors: advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software such as video games, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, and television and radio. (What are Creative Industries and Creative Economy, 2008-2011)

In each country, the demand for creativity and the potential for generating economic value from it are different (Siti Suriawati, 2012). Rapid growth of creative industries in East Asia such as in Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and China, shows that the government from each country compete to get a bigger portion of the industry as the potential of creative industries is slowly realized (Jamaluddin, Hasrul, & Faridah, 2014). The creative industry in Malaysia only contributed 1.3 per cent to the GDP compared to developed countries, such as the United States, South Korea and Japan, which contributed up to seven (7) per cent to the GDP, said prime minister Najib. Therefore, the Malaysian government has approved an allocation of RM200 million in the 2012 Budget to boost the local creative industry (Bernama, 2014). Najib elaborated that the Malaysian government chose to support and assist the creative industry to help translate the creativity of Malaysians into a sustainable industry and based on a business model that could give good returns (Bernama, 2014).

Under the umbrella of the creative industry is the entertainment industry, which could generate billions annually. This includes movies, short films, animations, comics, picturebooks, photoessays and other interactive media such as games. Most of these products are actually visual narratives.

Creative industry and cultural sector rely on each other to become more competitive and to sustain their products in the market (UNCTAD, 2008). Creative industry provides cultural activities with medium while cultural issues can become content of creative products. This close support between creative industry and cultural industry are also taking place in other countries in Asia such as China (Keane, 2007),

Singapore (Yue, 2006), South Korea (Kim, J.Agrusa, Lee, & K.Chon, 2007), and Taiwan (Keane, *Brave New World: Understanding China's Creative Vision*, 2004). From this data, development of local cultural activities and integrating the activities with creative products can be inferred to be a crucial move for Malaysia.

There are only small, independent publishers trying to foster local talent and publish books from local authors. There is no big publisher or organization producing local content fiction on a large scale, especially picturebooks. As a result of this situation, most picture books are imported. Most of the fiction books and young adult books are about worlds and experience of the western life (Dias, 2016). Therefore, a picturebook written by a Malaysian author is considered rare, more so if the book express an Asian experience.

Investment in all of these should not only include production budget, but also studies to understand how to produce quality visual narrative that could effectively communicate the experience of living in culture-rich Malaysia. Returning the call of our Prime Minister, to allow development on creative industries, knowledge on visual narratives is crucial. Therefore, this research is to fill in the gaps of knowledge in visual narratives, to venture into and encourage innovation in ways to narrate high-quality stories.

1.2 Motivational Factors

The modern picture book for adults is a relatively new genre, the result of few factors such as affordable printing technology, a highly educated and iterate society, and consumers having an eye for aesthetic. While urban life become increasingly

challenging, the nostalgic memories of small, simple wonderful moments in life is a pleasant reminder (Chou, 2010). The modern picture book is a product that satisfies the most direct and primitive emotional needs of an adult. Majority of the population living in the urban cities nowadays have increased ability to fulfil a quality life, although their routine is a fast-paced one. The picture book offers a desirable journey created with artistic values and poetic text. It is able to serve as an emotional escape and bring comfort to their loneliness and emptiness (Chou, 2010). As a graphic designer and illustrator, I have always been interested in the narratives and the emotional part of design. I would like to get more knowledge on the way visual tell stories.

Visual narratives are very consumable in their casual, emotional, relatable and perhaps even personal expression of everyday happenings. I believe visual is a powerful medium in presenting narratives and has the potential to empower people, to directly communicate emotions and experience. By going through the journey of my research, hopefully I can learn from the creation of great artists and be inspired to create and illustrated enjoyable visual narratives as interesting as them.

1.3 Problem Statement

Creating and illustrating a visual narrative is thoughtfully designed and well planned. The problem this research seeks to address is the lack of documentation of techniques in visual narrative. The research intent to determine and document a framework of visual narratives techniques that successfully recreates experience, as urged in the article written by Wolfenbarger, specifically stressing on picturebook text.

Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) stated in his research review:

We suggest that teachers and researchers work together to document and understand how readers – whether struggling or striving – make their way through the tensions and possibilities conveyed by picturebook texts. (p. 279)

In another article, Knight pointed out the need for better understanding on multimodal communication. Knight mentioned in particular the useful aesthetic that in his point of view is an important part of the multimodal composition. Useful aesthetic are functional aesthetic elements that include visual components in visual narratives.

Knight (2013) explained his thoughts on useful aesthetics:

Recent scholarship indicates the need for an increased understanding of the variety of contexts in which multimodal communication functions.... discussions concerning the aesthetic are part of new media and multimodal composition scholarship. The aesthetic is alluded to a variety of contexts relevant to new writing practices, including multimodality.... The literature documents that the aesthetic as a useful, rhetorical concept can deepen our understanding of multimodal composition. (p. 149)

This research answers Wolfenbarger and Knight's call to look at documentation and understanding on visual narratives in picturebooks. In search of a solution to improve visual narratives in Malaysia, the study looks at renowned and contemporary author pioneering in the field, Jimmy Liao's work for insight and learning points. The techniques of story telling he employs seem to evoke responds from most countries in the world.

1.4 Research Question

The study is interested in the role visual plays in a narrative and documenting visual narrative techniques in Jimmy's visual narrative "*When The Moon Forgot*". The

study aims to determine the way visuals and text work together to form a complete experience for the reader in this particular picture book.

The research aims to investigate the following research questions:

- 1. What is the main function of visuals (when working together with text) in delivering narration?**
- 2. What are the robust visual narrative techniques that deliver visual narrative experience?**
- 3. How do visual narrative techniques used by Jimmy Liao become learning points to local authors or artist?**

Question 1 and 2 will be answered after the textual analysis is done. Question 3 will be investigated by comparing of Jimmy's visual narration to a local author's visual narration.

1.5 Research Objective

- 1) To determine the main function visuals play (in the interplay with text) in visual narratives**

By analysing the role visual and words play from the perspective of three metafunctions: representational, interpersonal and compositional functions, which are present in the key narrative events. Next, the visual-text relationship for each scene is analysed and the role visuals play in the overall narrative communication is identified and described. The identification of visual-text relationship also gives information that leads to the discovery of the visual narrative techniques.

- 2) To investigate the robust visual narrative techniques that deliver visual experience**

The way the story is narrated, the way the main character is portrayed, reflects the experience within social and cultural values of society (Trahar, January 2009). A textual analysis of Jimmy's visual narrative will be done to pinpoint his effective techniques. The study is interested in the way visuals achieve the narrative aim and delivers a visual experience.

3) To compare different visual narrative techniques used by Jimmy Liao and a selected local author in their visual narratives

This research will draw a comparison between Jimmy's work and the work of a local illustrator; to identify the difference in visual narrative techniques used. It is also important to identify learning points for local illustrators, taking Jimmy's work as a exemplary model.

1.6 Research Gap and Limitations

The research is conducted to fill the gap of several past researches done.

For example, Neil Cohn (2013) mentioned in an article:

Narratives are an integral part of human expression.... Yet not much research has addressed the structure and comprehension of narrative images, for example, how do people create meaning out of sequential images? (p. 413)

Cohn (2013) also elaborated on his view on the following year:

The reason is that relatively little research has been carried out on narrative in sequential images. There is ample research in the verbal and filmic domain. (p. 440)

Neil Cohn, has in his research paper, stated the lack of research on narrative images. Cohn himself researches widely in the structure of sequential images, and have published papers on visual narrative structures. This research fills in on the part of comprehension and understanding of narrative images. He had also mentioned about

having ample research in verbal and filmic domain. That is the reason this research will not include those areas. The research only looks at static visual narratives. The other reason for this is to get a better focus on the research topic, as the research aims to have depth instead of covering a big scope. The study wants to focus solely on the interplay of narrative, text and images. The case studies will only focus on visual narratives in picture books. Comics are visual narratives and influence the development of the modern picture books historically and technically, but will not be the main focus of this research as ‘Comics have over the years developed a distinct identity of its own with its characteristic sequential nature of the pictures, and the predominance of pictures over words’ (Pimenta & Poovaiah, 2010).

The research is more inclined to choose modern visual narrative examples. Modern elements and the attraction to modern audience in the visual narrative is priority in the choice of selection. The research will mainly be conducted on Jimmy Liao visual narrative and comparison will be made with a local visual narrative. For comparative purpose, the research will choose a modern local narrative, preferably carrying similar visual style or ideologies with Jimmy’s narrative for easy comparison.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The knowledge on visual narrations is important for the development of the field of Arts in Malaysia. Knowledge on Visual Narratives contributes to the effectiveness of telling a story. The purpose of the research is to understand what makes a visual narrative effective and successful, and how does it interact with its audience and enable audience to experience the message the author wanted to convey.

“The creative industry and its clients need to embrace storytelling from the perspective of consumers who connect with their world across multiple media platforms—online and off, traditional and digital...” said Bertil Snel, partner of Adobe systems says in the article Storytelling—Not Digital—Is Transforming The Creative Industry (Snel, 2013). He stated that interactive storytelling has changed the creative industry, and now is the time where previously passive audience are able to co-create stories with brands. While his statement relates to corporate use of storytelling, it beautifully illustrates the power of stories.

The development of good story telling can enhance communication and innovation in the creative industry in Malaysia. Knowledge on digital storytelling is widely used in New York, the leading centre of creative industry (Smith, 2013). This research seeks the same potential of good narratives for creative industry in Malaysia. The application of this knowledge can benefit many industries such as publication and film industries. One of the reasons Malaysia has not excelled in these fields is lack of knowledge in telling a good story. Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios, which opens in 2013, position Malaysia as a top film production destination. The new production facility, located on 20 hectares in Iskandar, Malaysia, have place Johor at the centre of Malaysia's film industry and help position the nation as a filmmaking capital. (Johor set to be Malaysia's Movie Capital With New Pinewood Studio , 2012)

With this development and investment in film making, the soft skills in the arts of visual narratives is needed to enable the production of good local or international films. If a studio is the hardware of narratives then the knowledge on visual narratives is the important software art practitioners need to fuel the industry.

The knowledge on visual narrative allows creators to tap into a virtual world of fantasy, science fiction, and with endless potential and possibilities, telling stories that relates to people and their everyday life. These stories, if they are good, can become a representation of Malaysian community. Good visual narratives help audience to experience feelings and culture that would be hard to explain in other platforms. Visual narratives can be used to record many aspects of life, for example multi-cultural lifestyle and this kind of experience may not be available in other places in the world. This lifestyle can be experience by audience from other countries through visual narrations. Cultural elements in the visual narrative are tools that could give a competitive advantage to our country. More importantly, through engaging visual storytelling, our values, thoughts, lifestyle, and culture could be seen by people worldwide. This knowledge is crucial to develop our creative industry.

Malaysia's target to raise the standards of the creative industry is under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). By nurturing Malaysia's creative-content industry, one of the entry point projects under the ETP, a contribution of three billion ringgit to the gross national income is expected (Hooi, 2014). Besides, the industry also creates 10,400 jobs by 2020. Recently under Budget 2015, RM100mil was allocated for the Digital Content Industry Fund under the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (Hooi, 2014). With much hopes and money invested in the industry, research and studies on creative content provides further innovation in the field. This is the position where my research fills in.

1.8 Ethical Issues

All images are used for academic purposes only. All copyright of the images belongs to its rightful owner as cited. As the research does not involve respondent, there are no other ethical issues involved.

1.9 Summary

Visual narrative is interesting art forms that have potential to develop into one of the strong pillars of the growing creative industry. The knowledge on visual narrative techniques can be applied in creating quality visual narrative in medias such as on printed media and digital platforms. Static visual narratives are ‘art of scape’ that covers a fixed printed area and have a materialized visual. The viewers form the movement of the picture in their minds and can control of pacing of story. In this research, static visual narrative will be looked into and the techniques used in this kind of visual narrative will be studies. The questions the research want to answer includes the role of visuals in communicating narrative, the visual narrative techniques used in the case study and the learning point in these techniques when compared with a locally produced visual narrative.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The literature review is the review of history of visual narratives, development of modern picture book, development of visual narrative in different countries, past researches, theories proposed by scholars about the study of visual and narratives, and the suggested viewpoints to look into the subject of research. Conducting a literature review provides fundamental understanding about the subject of study and the circumstances where issues arise. By doing this, researchers will be able to uncover the problems and issues happening around the subject and look into possible ways of solving the obstacles and providing a framework for data collection.

2.1 Histories and Evolution of Visual Narratives

Visual narratives can be traced back to prehistoric ages where they are used for documenting historic events. After that, at about 1100, images started to spread to eastern civilisations. They are slowly utilized for other purposes such as spreading religion, exploration of art and in the age of printing machines, images act as a mass communication medium. Visual narratives in the east and west started to undergo different evolution as a result of assimilation with different culture and social environments.

Figure 2.1 is a summary of a brief history of visual narratives, with blue columns representing the west and red representing the east: