Preliminary Discussion on Program of Computer Graphic Design of Advertising Major

JIANG Xiehua[a],*; SUN Mingyi[a]

[a]Department of advertising, College of Arts,Changchun University of Science and Technology, Changchun, China.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

As the society rapidly develops, market has a large need for talent. Therefore, higher demand for cultivating versatile advertising talents for universities and colleges has been presented. Speaking of Computer Graphic Design, it is a foundational course of advertising major in China. To improve students' independent enthusiasm on study, inspire their innovative thinking and spirit, enhance their practical ability and apply the theoretical knowledge that they have learned to practice through ways like advocating "practice-emphasizing" teaching idea, optimizing teaching content and improving practical ability by advertising competitions, etc. is what this paper is going to discuss.

Key words: Advertising major; Computer graphic design; Program; Practice

INTRODUCTION

In June 1983, Department of Journalism and Communication of Xiamen University took the lead in recruiting 15 students of advertising major, and created a precedent of modern advertising education in China. Afterwards, Communication University of China (formerly Beijing Broadcasting Institute), Wuhan University, Shenzhen University and other universities set up the profession of advertising one after another. By far, there are more than 300 universities and colleges with advertising major in China. This kind of rapid development speed reflects the strong demand of the market for talents of advertising major. In the meantime, here produces a higher demand of each university and college for cultivation of versatile advertising talents.

Advertising major is an individual discipline. It is a kind of science studying on planning, creating, producing and operation management of advertising. In the meantime, it is a comprehensive discipline. It integrates knowledge and information of disciplines like marketing, journalism and communication, literature, aesthetics and psychology, etc. Advertising itself is pretty practical, so that it is required that teaching methods of advertising should emphasize on practical teaching. A foundational course of advertising major, Computer Graphic Design, is such a course that lay particular stress on practical teaching. It focuses on cultivation of comprehensive quality of students by combining theories and practical links.

However, many students of advertising major found that their skills mismatch industrial development, that they are not able to adapt to the requirements of jobs quickly, and that they always need companies' second training, after graduation. This phenomenon is due to two reasons. At first, the textbooks and design concept of advertising major in current universities and colleges lag far behind development of the industry at the moment. Secondly, teachers of specialized courses lack practical experiences. These two results that teaching of professional theories become disjointed with practice. Therefore, to inspire students' interest in study, cultivate "ready-to-hand" and "sustainable" innovative advertising talents through designing teaching content and applying different teaching approaches and proper evaluation methods according to the course characteristic of strong practicability of Computer Graphic Design is main theme of this paper.

1. TEACHING OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPUTER GRAPHIC DESIGN OF ADVERTISING MAJOR

The teaching objectives and significance of Computer Graphic Design advertising major are different from that of other courses of arts major. The course of Computer Graphic Design of arts major aims at comprehensive cultivation and training of students' ability of Computer Graphic Design. Its syllabus is mainly divided into the following three aspects, which are, design theories of graph and text, computer technology of graph and text design, and computer production of advertisement and related works. This course mainly teaches the complete producing process of design, modification, composition, and work of computer graph, artful processing, composition of a picture, colors, format design, design, producing and publishing of works with different themes, and evaluation of works, etc.. For comparison, advertising major's Computer Graphic Design's teaching objectives and significance lay more emphasis on cultivation of students' understanding of mainstream and frontier theories of computer graphic design and on application technology of computer graphic design. This course aims at cultivating students to comprehensively master characteristics and advantages of various kinds of software to computer graphic design, to correctly tutor actual work, and to successfully and effectively coordinate team's works.

2. DESIGN CONCEPT OF TEACHING CONTENT OF COMPUTER GRAPHIC DESIGN OF ADVERTISING MAJOR

Computer graphic design is a course emphasizing on practical skills, mainly focusing on cultivating students' software operation ability, ability of analyzing real cases and solving ability of graphic design, as well as strengthening students' creative thoughts. At present, many teachers teaching Computer Graphic Design in many institutes arrange lecture content mainly based on their own knowledge structure and teaching experience, secondarily students' knowledge structure and receptivity. This causes that students are just passively accepting and have no interest during having the lessons. This influences teaching effect. In addition, in some universities and colleges, the content of syllabus of Computer Graphic Design is vague, when most teachers lack understanding on the operation process of a company and have no choice but to arrange teaching content casually based on own understanding. This is the reason that students are unable to form comprehensive and systematical recognition, much less practical ability. Therefore, according to these problems, design of teaching content of Computer Graphic Design of advertising major should conform to the demands of market, start from responsibilities of employment positions, take students' interest into account, set diligent, usable and systematical teaching content, and try to perfectly combine theories and practice.

2.1 Designing Teaching Content According to Responsibilities of Real jobs

Career orientation of graduates of advertising major can be around advertising department of news media, advertising company, industry of market research and information consulting, and advertising operation and management, advertising planning and creation, design, production, marketing planning and market research and analysis in enterprise and public institute. Among such works, jobs relating to computer graphic design are relevant to positions of "designer", such as "graphic designer", "interior designer", "website designer", "animation designer" and "interactive designer", etc.. Considering that there is large distance between Computer Graphic Design and positions related to "designer", this paper suggests that institutes should give various considerations while selecting designing software for teaching content, and take both market demand and self-owned interdisciplinary advantageous resource into account. For example, in one university emphasizing on science and technology having majors related to computer science and technology, when it select designing software as its teaching software, it can emphatically consider software that "website designers" apply often, such as Dreamweaver, Flash and CSS Design, etc. Since "website designers" may involve in programming of the front end in real works, while designing assistant teaching content, it is good for students to establish comprehensive and systematical knowledge structure and application ability if teachers of computer major can be invited to lecture relating courses.

2.2 Designing Teaching Content According to Characteristics of Computer Graphic Design Software

There are many categories of software relating to computer graphic design. The following is just a simple classification, which is only for reference.

a) Software of graphic design: Photoshop, Illustrator, Coreldraw, Indesign and Founder FIT, etc..
b) Software of environment art design: 3D MAX and AutoCAD, etc.
c) Software of website design: Fireworks、Flash and Dream Weaver, etc..
d) Software of animation design: 3D MAX, MAYA and Premiere, etc..

The above software is the most common software of computer graphic design in advertising and relating industries. Each one of software has its significant advantages and characteristics, of which each corresponds

to one skilled work field. In this paper, software of graphic design would be taken as an example to explain how to design teaching content according to characteristics of computer graphic design software.

Generally, software for graphic design is divided into "image drawing", "image processing" and "text composition".

a) Software of image processing: Photoshop

The area of expertise of Photoshop is in image processing, rather than graph creating. Image processing refers to editing and processing the original bitmap image and applying some special effects, emphasizing on processing of images. It has a wide application area, including graphic design, advertising photography, image creativity, website designing, post modification, visual idea and interface design, etc. Among these areas, graphic design is the one with the most application of Photoshop. Many graphic pressworks like book cover and poster usually need image processing by Photoshop. Photoshop has another strength, which is, combining different objects together and changing the image. This is called retouching in the advertising area. Every advertisement work requires image processing and color adjustment by Photoshop. UI design (interface design) in interactive design area is an emerging area, which is more and more focused by software developers. At present, there is no professional software for UI design, so that most designers apply Photoshop to design UI.

b) Software of image drawing: Illustrator and Coreldraw

These two belong to software of vector plotting, so that they are applied to draw vector graph, which are not limited by the size of document and keeps clearness and precision of image. Their outstanding design ability is widely applied to logo design, sign making, model drawing, professional illustration, printing and publication, color output, website making and other areas. In addition, they can be utilized to provide higher precision and better control of sketch lines, for producing any small design or large complex projects.

c) Software of text composition: Indesign and Founder FIT

These two pieces of software both belong to software of text composition. Indesign can be applied to work on design with rich visual effect. It is widely applied to various media including print publishing and online publishing. It brings unprecedented creative experience, including comprehensive composition control, superb print format, and various effects of text, graph and image. It has both first-class form design and abundant printing setting. Founder FIT is comprehensive composition software of image, text and form. Its strong graph and image process ability and humanistic operation mode, super Chinese character and form processing ability can excellently present the idea of layout design, and can work for newspaper, magazine, book, brochure and inserts, etc..

According to the advantages and characteristics of the above-mentioned software of graphic design, teachers shall emphasize on advantageous functions of various software for lecturing students, while designing teaching content. In the meantime, in practical teaching that tests effect of theoretical teaching, teachers shall lead students to complete design works corresponding to various software accordingly.

2.3 Enhancing Teaching Approach of Computer Graphic Design of Advertising Major

2.3.1 Advocating Idea of "Emphasizing on Practice and Neglecting Theory"

In traditional teaching content of Computer Graphic Design, teachers always repeat what the old book says, when students memorize tools and basic use of software mechanically. Although most institutes have had multi-media teaching mode, it did not change the "duck-stuffing" teaching condition. In this way, students lose abilities of initiative creative ideas and practice. Therefore, it is necessary to change the current situation and to advocate teaching philosophy of "emphasizing on practice and neglecting theory". What should we do to achieve "emphasizing on practice and neglecting theory"? Advocating this new teaching idea is not equal to saying that the theory is not important. It means increasing the proportion of practical teaching in former teaching content distribution system. One example of quantitative index is noted here for reference. Taking current arrangement of class hour of Computer Graphic Design advertising major as an example, the total amount of class hours of Computer Graphic Design is 160, including 96 theoretical class hours and 64 experimental hours. If we pursue the teaching idea of "emphasizing on practice and neglecting theory", the theoretical class hour can be adjusted to 48 class hours, when experimental class hour can be adjusted to 112 class hours. In the meantime, theoretical class should be added the practical line at least 30 minutes. Each knowledge point of theoretical class shall refine the corresponding theme. In the meantime, theoretical class shall select practical teaching content and develop abundant practical training project, thus changing "duck-stuffing" teaching mode fundamentally, enabling students to master skill and creative idea of graphic design software and making students initiatively accept teaching content with strong interest.

2.3.2 Optimizing Teaching Content and Promoting Teaching Achievements

At present, the course of Computer Graphic Design in most institutes in China takes instruction of design software as the principle. Teachers apply computer aided instruction to explain practical skills of design software, while students are taking notes and repeating teachers' activity. For homework, students are usually required to complete a no-subject image by utilizing software orders that they learn from the class. Such teaching content only

focuses on software skill on class, but neglects cultivation of creative thinking ability that is the most important ability for students of advertising major. Under such teaching mode, students are lack of creative thinking and design concepts. They have few understanding on product and consumer, so that their advertising works lack the soul. They are no real advertising designer but software operator. Therefore, to cultivate excellent advertising talents, the primary ways are conveying software skills to students and inspire students' creative idea through optimizing teaching content of Computer Graphic Design, and enhancing both software and thinking abilities.

We can divide the teaching content of Computer Graphic Design to three progressive stages:

The first stage: teaching software skills. Software teaching can follow the "three-step" teaching plan and let students gain operation function of various kinds of design software gradually. The main point of the first step is to deal with application of computer graphic design in advertising area and first-stage commands of design software. The second step is about popularization teaching of advanced orders through presenting some simple works, to enable students master advanced functional commands of various software. The third step is about imitation teaching of design cases. Teachers explain high-order commands of kinds of design software by real design cases and works and present the design process according to such case works.

The second stage: cultivating creative thinking. Cultivation of creative thinking cannot be achieved in one day. Teachers' primary task is to lead students to convert roles and transform thinking, and to inspire students to think of ideas by thinking mode in actual job situation. Qualified institutes can divide students into groups, to simulate company operation and develop teaching activities in the way of workshops. In the stage of cultivating creative thinking, the most important link is to combine other theoretical courses of advertising major, making students achieve mastery through a comprehensive study of the other theoretical courses and realize the sole role of creative thinking of advertising in Campaign comprehensively and systematically. In this stage, only teachers with experience of company operation are capable of completing the requirements. Therefore, institutes can cooperate with large and middle advertising company to invite some professional advertising men to give special lecture. In the meantime, institutes can send professional teachers and excellent students to visit and learn from advertising companies, understand operation procedure and mode of such company and improve self comprehensive practical ability.

The third stage: teaching of examination of post production. This is extended teaching mode for computer graphic design software. It lays more emphasis on the application of software skill in actual work, mainly manifesting in document examination before mimeograph, inkjet printing and printing. Examination includes links like color pattern, bleed, multiply and document format, etc. In this stage, teachers are also required to possess practical operating experiences. Institutes can find local printshop, inkjet printing company and fast printing company relating to the industry as professional practice base, and provide teachers and students opportunities to practice by hand, as well as offer more employment opportunities for students.

3. IMPROVING THEORETICAL LEVEL AND PRACTICAL ABILITY OF TEACHERS

The main learning content of course of Computer Graphic Design is about updated theories and performance abilities of design software. In the teaching process, teachers are required to possess advanced and complete theoretical system and strong practical ability, and to focus on cultivation of students' professional practical ability. Along with rapid development of computer technology, design software upgrades at a fast speed. This requires teachers to follow up the updating speed of design software, quickly master updated technology of software, and teacher students the latest theoretical knowledge and operating skills. Generally, books relating to software's function would be far behind updates of software. Therefore, if teachers want to update self ability, they have to learn by self. Such ability promotion is a tough task for all teachers.

4. IMPROVING PRACTICAL ABILITY THROUGH ADVERTISING-ORIENTED COMPETITIONS

To get students gain strong practical ability, the most effective way is to organize advertising-oriented competitions for them. Such competition is an item that is most related to company operation. When students are involved in advertising-oriented competitions, they can get to real creative activities. In the meantime, their learning interest, team spirit, presentation skill and spot performance ability can be really inspired. For institutes, organizing such competitions for students can acquire many teaching cases and first-hand resource.

In the process of organizing competitions for students, teachers can guide students to work in operating mode of a formal advertising company. At first, students would be divided into teams according to the respective participation projects. Each project corresponds to one team. Secondly, each team shall set core roles like account, art and copy, etc.. The teacher will be responsible for leader of the whole project. Each competition item

is an individual brief. After receiving the brief, all teams shall be ready for work and shall follow the operating mode of advertising company. All team shall go through the entire process, which is, "project presentation—client explanation session—creation explanation meeting—brainstorming—artwork finishing—creative idea proposal—feedback from client—modification of creative idea—completing design—final proposal". This is for students to participate in a series of operation process of advertising company by themselves, and for improving students' innovation ability, team-work spirit and skill of communication and presentation.

CONCLUSION

How to improve students' independent enthusiasm on study, inspire their innovative thinking and spirit, enhance their practical ability and apply the theoretical knowledge that they have learned to practice is the ultimate goal of perfecting teaching content of Computer Graphic Design of Advertising Major. This paper suggests some design of teaching content of Computer Graphic Design and ideas of teaching approaches. They need further research and study in after teaching practices, to adapt to advertising companies' and market's various demands for Computer Graphic Design course of institutions

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