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## The Use of Handicraft Art as a Visualization Method to Identify and Understand Chinese Tea Plants

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### Abstract

Tea plays a vital role in Chinese culture, impacting all ages and social groups. Its enduring presence across history highlights its significance within Chinese culture. Chinese Language and Culture learners should recognize tea's fundamental role, encompassing types, benefits, and origins. Handicraft art provides a creative approach, visually portraying unique tea characteristics for a deeper understanding.

This research assesses handicraft art's effectiveness in recognizing and categorizing Chinese tea plant forms for Chinese language learners at the University Level. This pedagogical tool offers self-expression and creativity, fostering holistic learning experiences. The research engages 55 students to gather insights into the effectiveness of the handicraft art approach. Handicraft art enables exploration from botanical and artistic angles, highlighting its versatile teaching approach. Effective integrating instructional media with content motivates learner engagement and optimizes learning outcomes. This research employs handicraft art to enrich comprehension of Chinese tea culture's plant forms. Through creative expression and visual engagement, learners comprehensively understand the intricate world of Chinese tea culture.

**Keywords:** *Chinese tea culture, handicraft art, cultural education, instructional media integration.*

### Introduction

Chinese culture has spread worldwide in recent years, indicating its increasing popularity. As one of the oldest civilizations, China has a long history and has created a magnificent Chinese culture that has significantly impacted the world. One of the highly renowned Chinese cultures is the Tea Drinking Culture, known as "茶艺" (*Chayi*). The tea-drinking culture started during the Song Dynasty when nobles used tea to hold meetings discussing philosophy, poetry, and politics. In these gatherings, individuals would present their finest teas, and guests would observe how the

tea was prepared and savor each cup. Glory and appreciation were bestowed upon anyone who left a lasting impression on their guests. Gradually, tea drinking became a symbol of artistic conception and etiquette, deeply rooted in the cultural realm.

Only people from the upper social hierarchy during the Tang Dynasty and earlier could regularly enjoy tea. However, after the prosperity of tea during the Song Dynasty, it became more accessible to people and quickly spread throughout China.

Tea culture is highly significant in the geographical and economic context of China. Apart from being a famous brand, Chinese tea culture is inseparably linked to Chinese culture, which has been intertwined with the history of tea cultivation in China for centuries (Pan, 2023). The distinction between tea culture in China and other Western countries lies in the fact that tea is associated with China not only for its economic or medicinal attributes but also for its spiritual meaning.

People of all ages and social classes can come anytime to enjoy tea and each other's company. Tea is served to welcome guests and to show respect, and this tradition has been prevalent since ancient times. In modern society, people drink tea, savor the traditions of tea consumption, and relish the nostalgic atmosphere.

The long journey of tea culture, as tea originated in China and has been present since ancient times with a continuous history, shows that tea is one of the essential parts of Chinese culture (Sigley, 2015). Therefore, Chinese Language and Culture learners must understand tea as an indispensable aspect of learning about Chinese culture. This encompasses the types of tea and their benefits and the plants used to make tea.

In China itself, there are five types of original teas: (1) black tea, (2) green tea, (3) oolong tea, (4) pu-erh tea, and (5) white tea. All these original teas are prepared from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant (Samanta, 2020). As mentioned, all these tea types originate from the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*. It is fascinating to showcase the appearance of the plants from these five different tea products before undergoing the tea-making process. This can help learners gain a deeper understanding of Chinese tea.

Comprehending this matter in several ways can be done, including utilizing visual media or teaching aids that can take the form of handicraft artwork. By using various forms of handicraft art, such as painting, carving, ceramics, and other media, we are expected to identify the unique characteristics of each tea plant variety and categorize them more effectively. The study of handicraft art can be an intriguing approach. Handicraft art is a creative activity that involves crafting various objects using hands with specific skills and techniques (Mayar, 2022). In this context, handicraft art can be used as an alternative and creative method to get acquainted with the different forms of tea plants in China.

This research aims to analyze the utilization of handicraft art in recognizing the forms of tea plants in China. By utilizing handicraft art, the study seeks to identify the unique characteristics of tea plants and categorize them more effectively. The research also aims to understand whether handicraft art can help students understand tea plants' different qualities and characteristics.

## **Handicraft Art in Learning**

Handicraft art has long been used for education and cultural recognition. With its rich history, handicraft art has proven to be an effective tool in teaching cultural values and introducing various art forms from different communities worldwide. Craft as self-expression is an educational model combining craft and art education. This model is based on a holistic craft process and self-expression, which refers to expressing one's inner self through words, music, painting, and similar art forms (Pöllänen, 2011). In this pedagogical model, assessment is based on the process of self-expression and creativity. Reflection focuses on learning from the craft process, self-orientation, work, and meaningful experiences and emotions for the learners.

Regarding the means of handicrafts itself, it provides and encourages learners to be more creative with what they plan to create or produce. Some handicrafts can also mimic natural objects in the real world. Students engage with realistic representations, accurate botanical illustrations, and actual plants. The use of these resources draws attention to the distinction between botanical and artistic understandings of plants. It highlights the relevance of considering various modes of engagement while designing pedagogical initiatives to study plants through art and design (Sachdev, 2021). Various arts and crafts represent the natural form of objects but in non-living forms that can be preserved and have advantages as sustainable learning media.

According to Sanjaya (2011), instructional media should prioritize several aspects. The media used in teaching and learning should facilitate and motivate learners in their learning activities. When educators utilize engaging and supportive media that aligns with the content, learners' attention will be focused on it. However, if educators use appropriate media when delivering the learning material, learners' attention may stay focused, leading to the failure to achieve the learning objectives.

## **Methodology**

The methodology employed for this research involves designing and implementing a hands-on approach, followed by collecting reviews from a group of 55 students. The aim is to assess the effectiveness of utilizing handicraft art for recognizing and comprehending Chinese tea plant forms among University-Level Chinese language learners.

Creating a handicraft art design for educational purposes is a complex task but involves a complex process. It not only determines the establishment of knowledge structure but also generates new information and migration, indicating the formation of creative behavior. The practical application process to the development of final innovation is utilizing knowledge strategy to achieve knowledge creation, which constitutes a series of innovation-based teaching processes.

In this situation, the design activity is closely connected to the stages of the design process outlined by The development of the Design Thinking of "Tao, Vessel, Change, and Comprehensiveness," which is rooted in the ancient wisdom of the Book of Changes. This concept has been reintroduced and reformulated as design Thinking by Fang, Sun, Tong, and Kang (2023).

The introduced concept follows a step-by-step approach, where "Tao" is the guiding principle for the entire cultural creative design, encompassing discussions on design consensus

and understanding cultural products. The next step, "Vessel," involves creating a tangible tool by establishing the target group, describing the usage context, and formulating the design plan. Subsequently, "Change" comes into play, representing the transformation process. This step includes analyzing cultural characteristics, linking product lines, and selecting suitable concepts. Finally, "Comprehensiveness" denotes the outcome, encompassing design development and finalization.

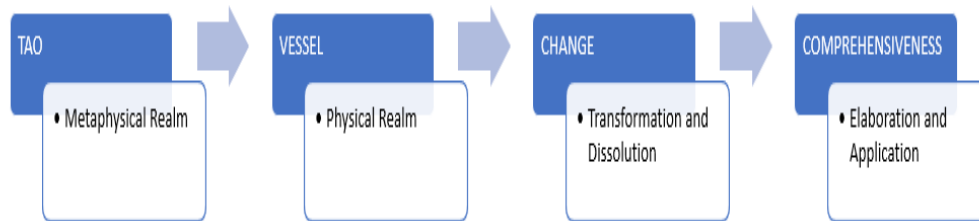


Figure 1. The scenario approach of cultural and creative design by Fang, Sun, Tong, and Kang (2023).

## Data Analysis

### Tao

The guiding references searched and implemented by the learner are from various sources, including books, research papers, academic articles, online resources, tutorials, and practical guides related to the topic. These references serve as valuable sources of information and knowledge that learners use to deepen their understanding and gain insights into the subject. Moreover, learners also benefit from interacting with educators and peers who provide guidance and share their knowledge regarding the issues. Collaborating and engaging in discussions are implemented in the learning experience to help learners broaden their perspectives. This multidimensional learning strategy is a symphony of varied resources and human relationships. The combination of textual references and interpersonal interactions results in a dynamic, multifaceted, comprehensive learning experience, providing learners with a well-rounded perspective that transcends beyond individual perspectives.

*"Camellia sinensis is a tea plant where its leaves and leaf buds are used to produce tea. White tea, green tea, oolong tea, and black tea (or red tea) are all made from the processed leaves of this species, but they undergo different oxidation levels. Camellia sinensis grows in mainland China, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, but it is now cultivated worldwide, especially in tropical and subtropical regions. This plant resembles a small shrub or tree, typically pruned to a height of less than two meters when cultivated for leaf harvesting. It has a strong taproot and robust growth. The flowers of Camellia sinensis are yellow-white, with a diameter of about 2.5-4 cm, and consist of 7 to 8 petals. The seeds of both Camellia sinensis and Camellia oleifera can be pressed to produce tea oil, seasoning spices, and cooking oil, which should not be confused with tea tree oil (essential oil)*

*derived from different parts of the tea plant used for medical and cosmetic purposes. The leaves of this plant have a length of about 4-15 cm and a width of 2-5 cm. Young leaves with a light green color are preferred for tea production; they have short white hairs on the underside.*

*Meanwhile, older leaves are darker green. Different ages of leaves yield varying tea qualities due to their differing chemical compositions. Typically, the leaf bud (apical bud) and the first two to three leaves are harvested for processing. This plucking process is repeated every one to two weeks."*

## **Vessel**

Establishing the design plan is a crucial step in the design process. It involves outlining a clear and detailed roadmap for executing the design. This plan acts as a guide that directs the entire design project from start to finish. By carefully establishing the design plan, learners can ensure a systematic and efficient execution of their ideas, resulting in a successful and effective final design.

Creating a clearly defined design plan is crucial in establishing the framework for the entire project. The strategy outlined in this plan acts as a detailed road map for completing the design from conception to completion. This directive is a reference point for coordinating efforts, supplies, and time management. By carefully constructing the design plan, learners can ensure that their imaginative ideas are methodically and orderly turned into actual results. The design plan's effectiveness ultimately influences the success of the project (Korhonen, Jääskeläinen, Laine, & Saukkonen., 2023). A well-structured plan makes the desired design more likely to be realized while promoting efficient work, resource allocation, and timetable adherence. The compass directs the entire design journey to a fruitful conclusion.

*"The Camellia Sinensis tea plant can be processed into various types of tea with beneficial health properties. It also possesses a beautiful appearance, mainly when it blooms, showcasing the beauty of its flowers. Inspired by the beauty of the Camellia Sinensis tea plant, the writer has created a Chinese handicraft. The purpose of crafting this handmade piece is to enhance hand skills in creating art and to expand one's insights and knowledge through artistic media. The following are the materials and steps to develop the Chinese handicraft (Camellia Sinensis):*

*Materials for Making the Chinese Handicraft (Camellia Sinensis):*

- 1. Green and white stockings*
- 2. Metallic wire (green and white)*
- 3. Imitation stamens*
- 4. Green floral tape*
- 5. Thread*

*Steps to Make the Chinese Handicraft (Camellia Sinensis):*

- 1. Wrap the wire around a bottle or pipe, then twist and cut it.*

2. *Cover the wire with a cut stocking piece according to its size and tie it with thread.*
3. *Trim any excess stocking with scissors for a neater appearance.*
4. *Attach the imitation stamens to the stem by tying them with thread.*
5. *Tie each petal to the stem one by one.*
6. *Cover the stem with green floral tape.*
7. *Bend the petals to make it look like the flower is blooming, and the flower made from the stocking is now completed and can be used as decoration.*



Figure 2. Materials for Making the Chinese Handicraft (Camellia Sinensis)

## **Change**

Outcome or product that is achieved after implementing the design plan. It is the tangible manifestation of the creative ideas and efforts invested in the design project. It emphasizes using artistic techniques and skills to create aesthetically pleasing and unique products. Learner carefully considers the result, incorporating product craft art. Learners can create a cohesive and visually appealing product collection that reflects their artistic vision and resonates with the intended audience.

The emphasis on artistic techniques and skills emphasizes the expertise that goes into developing goods that are not only practical but also aesthetically beautiful. The learner's deliberate evaluation of the outcome, mixed with product craft art, gives the works a unique and distinct character. Learners create a harmonic and visually captivating collection by weaving together the parts of the design plan, artistic prowess, and artistry. This collection reflects their aesthetic vision and communicates well with the target audience. In this case, the design outcome demonstrates the

learner's commitment, creative imagination, and capacity to turn ideas into reality, creating a lasting impression on both the creator and those who engage with the finished product.



Figure 3. Product of the Chinese Handicraft (Camellia Sinensis)

### Comprehensiveness

Design development and finalization are crucial stages. Learners refine their initial concepts and ideas into more detailed, concrete designs during the design development phase. This involves further research and experimentation to improve. Once the plan has been fully developed and perfected, it moves to the finalization stage.

In this stage, the design is prepared to be presented in an art exhibition of handicraft works. Learners receive questions and feedback about their handicraft creations during this exhibition, aligned to showcase Chinese cultural learning. The finalization stage also involves testing the functionality and aesthetics of the design. Quality control checks are conducted to ensure that the plan meets the required standards and specifications.

By going through these stages, learners can create well-executed and functional designs that align with the objective of cultural learning about China.

The handicraft exhibition event was attended by 55 students as visitors who enjoyed the artwork. In this event, visitors provided comments containing impressions, messages, critiques, and suggestions about the showcased artworks. The following is a summary of the words presented in a thematic format.

Educational means	Art means	Clarity
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Illustrating the Aesthetics and Uniqueness of the Camellia Sinensis Plant</i></li> <li>• <i>A Deep Exploration of a Rarely Known Camellia Sinensis</i></li> <li>• <i>Introduction to the Camellia Sinensis</i></li> <li>• <i>Unveiling the Beauty and Significance of the Chinese Tea Plant</i></li> <li>• <i>Unraveling the Enigma of the Chinese Tea Plant</i></li> <li>• <i>Authenticity and Similarity to the real object</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Highly Creative and Aesthetically Pleasing</i></li> <li>• <i>An Enthralling Work of Captivating Beauty</i></li> <li>• <i>Neat and Orderly Presentation</i></li> <li>• <i>Exquisite Display of Elaborate Details</i></li> <li>• <i>Reviving the Beauty of Flowers through 3D Art</i></li> <li>• <i>An Impressive Visual Touch to Bring Life to the Camellia Sinensis</i></li> <li>• <i>Subtle Chinese Influences Woven into Every Element</i></li> <li>• <i>Presenting Grounded Artistry within a Rich Cultural Context</i></li> <li>• <i>A Valuable Medium for Cultural Learning</i></li> <li>• <i>Inviting Audiences to Enhance Cultural Understanding</i></li> <li>• <i>Uniquely Chosen Materials</i></li> <li>• <i>Bringing Authenticity through Unconventional Selections</i></li> <li>• <i>Highly Affordable Production Costs</i></li> <li>• <i>Delivering Brilliant Artistry Without Straining Budgets</i></li> <li>• <i>Stunning Realism in Every Detail</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Highly commendable for its comprehensive explanations</i></li> <li>• <i>The conveyance of information is remarkably lucid and precise.</i></li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Infusing Artwork with Exceptional Visual Quality</i></li> </ul>	
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The project's completion is an achievement in art and education that exudes clarity and originality. The initiative cleverly delivers educational insights into the aesthetics and originality of the Chinese tea plant through 3D Handicrafts. The artworks are vehicles for learning and exhibit extraordinary aesthetic excellence. It illustrates the Chinese tea plant's significance, and visitors are compelled to learn more about the form of the Chinese Tea Plant.

The project's distinctive material selections are significant because they demonstrate an honest relationship between the art and its subject. This unique technique demonstrates that excellent creativity must not strain big budgets while enhancing authenticity and ensuring affordability. The initiative is praised for its precision, insightful informational delivery, and instructional value. The information presented provides a beautiful window into the world of the Camellia Sinensis plant, its beauty, and its significance in terms of culture.

Overall, this initiative skillfully blends art and knowledge as evidence of inventive talent's effectiveness in illuminating and engrossing audiences, inviting more understanding of exploration and cultural enlightenment.

Positive comments regarding Handicraft art as a learning tools	Some advance revision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Expressing Interest in Acquiring Further Knowledge about the Camellia Sinensis Plant.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Facilitating the Understanding That Tea Plants Also Bear Flowers; Until Now, I Only Knew About Their Leaves</i></li> <li>➤ <i>As someone Who Had Never Seen This Plant Before, I Can Now Visualize It with the Aid of This Information.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Assisting in Recognizing the Form and Characteristics of the Camellia Sinensis Plant</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Aiding in the Comprehension of the Different Parts of the Camellia Sinensis Plant</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Enriching Mandarin Vocabulary with New Terms</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Requires Addition of Pinyin for Each Displayed Hanzi</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The addition of a Cover Frame is Necessary to Add an Elegant Touch</i></li> <li>➤ <i>A Closed Frame is Needed for Dust Protection</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Frame Size to be Enlarged</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Background and Packaging Enhanced to Complement the Perfection of the Artwork of the Camellia Sinensis Plant</i></li> </ul>

Many visitors suggested a desire to learn more about the Camellia Sinensis plant. The illustration helped them understand that tea plants also produce flowers and leaves. Those unfamiliar with the plant had a clear mental image thanks to the artwork. It aided in defining the plant's shape and

distinctive characteristics, facilitating a thorough understanding of its constituent parts. The addition of new terms to the Mandarin lexicon was received as well.

However, some recommendations for enhancements were made. The addition of Pinyin for Hanzi characters is requested to help with pronunciation. It is thought that a cover frame with a closed construction for dust protection is necessary to add elegance. The response highlights the significant contribution that handicraft art makes to improving learning while making perceptive recommendations for improvement.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The research offers this teaching method that uses handicrafts to help students understand and envision Chinese tea plants. This strategy is based on the knowledge that visual aids can significantly improve educational experiences, especially in challenging disciplines like botany and culture. Learners use handicraft art to engage in a hands-on, creative process beyond conventional approaches. The research's emphasis on the *Camellia Sinensis* plant, the source of Chinese tea, is consistent with the notion that concrete illustrations might improve students' understanding of the plant's shape, structure, and traits. This method makes identifying the plant's many parts easier and emphasizes their cultural importance because tea is closely associated with Chinese culture.

A layer of aesthetic appreciation is added by incorporating artistic skills into the learning process. This is consistent with the idea that aesthetics might improve learning enjoyment and memory retention. Additionally, it enables students to emotionally engage with the material, developing a stronger bond with it.

The use of this creative medium to expand the Mandarin vocabulary is significant. It exemplifies how interdisciplinary learning may be incorporated easily, enhancing learners' linguistic abilities as they investigate botanical and cultural topics. This commitment to holistic education mirrors the contemporary strategy of teaching content in a broader context. However, certain adjustments are advised, as indicated in the remarks. The learning experience might be improved by adding Pinyin for Hanzi characters, improving the framing, and upgrading packaging aesthetics. These recommendations highlight the significance of ensuring the presentation aligns with the learning objectives while improving usability and aesthetic appeal.

In conclusion, the study's innovative strategy for utilizing handicraft artwork to visualize information about Chinese tea plants exhibits a singular synthesis of creativity, culture, and education. It emphasizes the importance of engaging the senses and using experience learning to communicate complex concepts. The recommendations for improvement highlight how flexible educational approaches are, showing how feedback can improve and elevate learning opportunities.

**Author Contributions:** All authors have contributed equally.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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