

Toward an Active Use of Pictograms

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A: Good day, everybody. I am Taketo Kunugita.

B: I am Gaku Oike.

C: And, I am Aina Kanazawa.

A: We have a question. When you look at this, what comes to mind?

B: Is it complicated?

C: Is it hard to imagine what it means?

A: How about this?

B: Is it much easier to understand?

A: As you may know, these are what are called “pictograms”. In fact, pictograms were originated in Japan and spread around the world. Do you remember this performance at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics? This “pictogram performance” impressed us a lot, and we found that it became a big topic overseas, too. Considering this, we realized that pictograms are a universal design that can overcome language barriers and bridge gaps between cultures. The goal of our presentation today is to promote the use of pictograms in various situations. The next 10 minutes will hopefully change the way you see pictograms. To that end, we have considered three ways to make effective uses of pictograms.

B: First, look at this. This is a brochure of the popular shopping mall, "Umie", in the center of Kobe. There are a lot of stores, therefore the characters are small and hard to read. Furthermore, the brochure is obviously not for international tourists because only a Japanese version is available. So, we propose the use of pictograms to solve these problems. Here is what we created to make the brochure. Its concept is “A brochure that crosses the language barrier”. We referred to existing pictograms and created new pictograms as needed. The same type of store has the same design and color. We also replaced the stairs and rest areas with pictograms. You probably feel this one is much better for visitors from abroad. According to a questionnaire of 50 students in our school, about 90% of respondents said the pamphlets including pictograms are clearer. We also surveyed 20 people from abroad. A similar result can be found. Considering these opinions, we can say that pictograms successfully overcome the language barrier.

C: Our second approach is to use pictograms in recipes. Look at this. Here are two recipes for “nikujaga”, a kind of typical Japanese dish. The one on the left is a recipe explained only in sentences. On the other hand, the one on the right is an original recipe that incorporates pictograms. The right one is easier to see, even though the contents are the same. It can be said that pictograms assist in explanations. We focused on the process of cutting the ingredients. In the pictogram, we design two

points, the action of "cutting" and the shape of cutting. We cut potatoes into bite sizes and cut onions into wedges. These differences in the ways of cutting are also reproduced in the pictogram. The action of adding ingredients is expressed in pictograms too. Moreover, pictograms are also compatible with various cooking methods such as frying, steaming, and boiling. The only thing we need to add to these pictograms is the quantity or time information. It's difficult to explain all tips, but we can say that pictograms visually support comprehension.

A: Pictograms allow making difficult things easier to grasp. These are marks that give children a visual understanding of what they should not do. Small children who have not mastered a language encounter many unclear things so, their action may carry the risk of facing a crisis. By overlaying a clear action with a cross design, it clearly expresses the meaning of "prohibition". For instance, this pictogram indicates a command not to climb. I used to climb anywhere and everywhere when I was a kid, like on TV stands. Of course, these actions can carry dangerous consequences. Such a notice prevents children from facing a crisis in advance. Pictograms not only indicate prohibition, but they also encourage children to learn. When it comes to learning, pictograms must be designed in fun and exciting ways to attract their interests. The most common pictograms are human designs, but how about replacing the human design with an animal like a penguin. Children will be more interested in the design. We also consider using the monster. The existence of monster is a little too scary for kids. That is why, when we use a monster as a design, we can explain what children must not do. Making the best use of these ideas, we created a book for kids. We mentioned social manners by utilizing marks and pictograms. Manners are complicated for kids, but the use of these original pictogram designs enables children to know how they should behave when they go out. Marks and pictograms have slightly different concepts, but both simplify complex things. Considering this, it can be said that pictograms will soon be in high demand for children.

B: So, that concludes our talk on how versatile pictograms can be.

C: As we mentioned earlier, pictograms can transcend language barriers, help us visually, and often support children.

A: It goes without saying that pictograms are a wonderful idea from Japan.

B: We can be proud of this and keep contributing to a better society.

C: Let us keep in mind the way of using pictograms in case we have difficulty explaining something.

A: Thank you for listening.