RE-CONFIGURABLE DOLL/STUFFED TOY

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ABSTRACT

A re-configurable doll for use as a teaching aid or an article of entertainment comprises a torso, a head attached to the torso, and arms and legs attached to the torso. A plurality of external components are removable and mountable on the head of the re-configurable doll. Further, in another aspect of the invention, there is a storage container for receiving and retaining the plurality of facial features. The storage container has a plurality of compartments.
Fig 9
RE-CONFIGURABLE DOLL/STUFFED TOY

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to dolls and to stuffed toys, and more particularly to dolls and to stuffed toys that have repositionable pieces and are thereby re-configurable. Further, this re-configurable doll may be used as a teaching aid.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Dolls of various forms and figures are one of the oldest types of toys used by children. From very early recorded times, various types of dolls, and the like, have been shown to exist in various cultures and geographic locations throughout the world. Such dolls come in many forms, such as a humans and animals, and forms resembling humans and animals. Also dolls come in forms that are analogous to humans and animals, but do not exist in the world, including aliens, dragons, monsters, and many others.

[0003] Many early dolls were made of plaster or china, wood, or any other material that was readily available at the time. More recently, dolls have been made of fabric, and comprise an outer fabric layer stuffed with a soft stuffing material. Such dolls are commonly referred to as stuffed toys.

[0004] Even more modern dolls and stuffed toys are made from modern materials, and also have many different types of features, such as moveable parts, replaceable parts, styable hair, voice recording, storage compartments, and many others. The effect of modern technology on dolls is quite widespread. However, there remains a fundamental basis for dolls and stuffed toys, in that they tend to look like a human or animal figure, or even animal-like figure, and include features such as eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, feet, hair, and so on. These features make a doll or stuffed toy more life-like, and therefore easier to relate to for young children. Typically, young children use such dolls or stuffed toys to recreate real-life situations, such as playing house, acting as a replacement of a friend, and so on. However, much of the change in situation between the child and the doll must come from the child's imagination.

[0005] In order for a doll/stuffed toy to be more versatile, it would be useful for such a doll/stuffed toy to be re-configurable. More specifically, the various features of the doll/stuffed toy would be readily removable and replaceable. Further, such a doll/stuffed toy would act as a significant teaching aid for young children.

[0006] One such re-configurable doll, or at least play-figure, is known as Mr. Potato Head and consists of a plastic head having small discrete apertures therein. The various features of a human, such as ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and so on, are moulded from plastic and each have a small peg extending outwardly therefrom. The small peg frictionally engages the small discrete apertures in the plastic head, thus permitting a variety of facial expressions and so on to be constructed. While this particular figure was quite popular with children at one time, the discrete apertures limited the number of places that the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and so on could be placed. Further, it was not as appealing to small children as it might have been, because it was made of hard plastic and was not cuddly. Since the learning of facial expressions and the like is very applicable to younger children, it missed its target audience to some degree.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] U.S. Pat. No. 6,758,717 issued Jul. 6, 2004 to Park et al, discloses a doll having changeable eyes and removable alternative face. The doll head defines a pair of eye apertures and a pair of outwardly extending ears. A mask also having eye apertures and ear portions is removably attached to the doll head to overlie the facial portions thereof. The mask includes a snap-fit attachment that engages the ear portions of the doll head. An eye change mechanism within the doll head provides alternative eye images viewed through the respective eye apertures of the head and mask.

[0008] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy.

[0009] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy that can be used as a teaching aid.

[0010] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy that has variable facial expressions.

[0011] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy that is suitable for very young children.

[0012] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy that also has numbers and letters that can be mounted on it.

[0013] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy, wherein pieces can be mounted virtually the entire body.

[0014] It is an object of the present invention to provide a re-configurable doll/stuffed toy that is entertaining for a child to play with.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] In accordance with one aspect of the present invention there is disclosed a novel re-configurable doll for use as a teaching aid or an article of entertainment. The re-configurable doll comprises a torso, a head attached to the torso, and arms and legs attached to the torso. A plurality of external components are removably mountable on the head of the re-configurable doll.

[0016] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention there is disclosed a novel teaching aid for learning about facial anatomy and expressions. The teaching aid comprises a torso, a head attached to the torso, and arms and legs attached to the torso. A plurality of external components are removably mountable on the head of the re-configurable doll. There is also a storage container for receiving and retaining the plurality of external components. The storage container has a plurality of compartments.

[0017] Other advantages, features and characteristics of the present invention, as well as methods of operation and functions of the related elements of the structure, and the combination of parts and economies of manufacture, will become more apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description and the appended claims with reference to the accompanying drawings, the latter of which is briefly described herein below.
presently preferred embodiment of the invention will now be illustrated by way of example. It is expressly understood, however, that the drawings are for the purpose of illustration and description only, and are not intended as a definition of the limits of the invention. In the accompanying drawings:

[0019] FIG. 1 is a front plan view of a first preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, with removable facial features in place;  

[0020] FIG. 2 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 1, with the facial features removed;  

[0021] FIG. 3 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 1, with the facial features replaced onto the face of the stuffed toy or doll;  

[0022] FIG. 4 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 1, with the facial features replaced onto the face of the stuffed toy or doll, in an unusual manner;  

[0023] FIG. 5 is a front plan view of a second preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, with removable facial features in place;  

[0024] FIG. 6 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 5, with the facial features removed;  

[0025] FIG. 7 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 5, with the facial features replaced onto the face of the stuffed toy or doll;  

[0026] FIG. 8 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 5, except showing other removable and replaceable features placed on the head and torso of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy; and,  

[0027] FIG. 9 is a front plan view similar to FIG. 5, except showing the removable and replaceable features placed in an unusual manner on the head and torso of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy;  

[0028] FIG. 10 is a front plan view of a third preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, with a plurality of removable and replaceable external components in place;  

[0029] FIG. 11 is a front plan view of a fourth preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, with a plurality of removable and replaceable external components in place;  

[0030] FIG. 12 is a front plan view of a fifth preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, with a plurality of removable and replaceable external components in place, specifically facial features; and,  

[0031] FIG. 13 is a perspective view of a container for holding the various removable and replaceable parts of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention.  

[0032] Advantages, features and characteristics of the present invention, as well as functions of the related elements of the structure, and the combination of parts and economies of manufacture, will become more apparent upon consideration of the following detailed description with reference to the accompanying drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0033] Referring to FIGS. 1 through 13 of the drawings, it will be noted that FIGS. 1 through 4 illustrate the first preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention, and FIGS. 5 through 9 illustrate the second preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention. FIG. 10 illustrates the third preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention, FIG. 11 illustrates the fourth preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention, FIG. 12 illustrates the fourth preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention, and FIG. 13 is part of the invention that can be used with any embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy of the present invention.  

[0034] References will now be made to FIGS. 1 through 8, which show a first preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, as indicated by the general reference numeral 120. The re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 120 is essentially an animal form, specifically a Teddy Bear, having a torso 122, left and right arms 124.126, left and right legs 128.130, a neck 132, and a head 134. The head 134 is attached to the torso 122 by the neck 132, and the arms and legs are also attached to the torso, as would be expected. There is also a plurality of external components removably mounted on the head 134. As illustrated, the plurality of external components comprise facial features such as eyes 140.142, nose 144, mouth 146, and ears 148.150, that are removably and replaceably mounted on the head 134. As shown, the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 120 resembles a friendly animal-like face with a very human expression, which is something that young children can identify with. There are also other external components removably and replaceably mounted on the torso 112, arms 124.126 and legs 128.130. More specifically, the numeral “1”, as indicated by reference numeral 131, is removably and replaceably mounted on the right arm 126, the letter “I”, as indicated by reference numeral 133 is removably and replaceably mounted on the left arm 124, a random shape 135 is removably and replaceably mounted on the torso 122, a square 137 is removably and replaceably mounted on the right leg 130, and a triangle 139 is removably and replaceably mounted on the left leg 128.  

[0035] The eyes 140.142, nose 144, mouth 146, and ears 148.150 are individual components made from the hook type material of a hook-and-loop fastener system. The material on the head of the doll/stuffed toy 120 is a soft fabric material having small loops of thread exposed at its surface. The hooks of the hook-and-loop fastener system engage these loops of material to retain the removable and replaceable features in place on the head of the doll/stuffed toy 120.  

[0036] FIG. 2 shows the doll/stuffed toy 120 of FIG. 1 with the facial features (eyes 140.142, nose 144, mouth 146, and ears 148.150) removed from its head 134. Such removal of the facial features is readily done by a young child.  

[0037] FIG. 3 shows the doll/stuffed toy 120 with the removable and replaceable facial features (eyes 140.142, nose 144, mouth 146, and ears 148.150) replaced onto the head 134, in a completely different pattern, showing a somewhat different facial expression. Such replacement of the facial features is readily done by a young child.  

[0038] FIG. 4 again shows the doll/stuffed toy 120 having the removable and replaceable facial features (eyes 140.142, nose 144, mouth 146, and ears 148.150) in a completely different and unusual pattern, which is not readily recognizable as a facial expression, but might be quite funny to a child, thus providing entertainment for the child.  

[0039] Reference will now be made to FIGS. 5 through 8, which show a second preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, as indicated by the general reference numeral 220. The re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 220 is a human-like figure, having a torso 222, left and right arms 224.226, left and right legs 228.230, a neck 232, and a head 234. There are various features on the head 234, such as eyes 240.242, eyebrows 241.243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248.250, and hair 252, that are removably and replaceably mounted on the head 234. In this manner, the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 220 resembles a human-like face that young children can identify
with, and is generally recognizable as being similar to a male. There are also features, specifically numbers and letters 260, that are removable and replaceably mounted on the torso 222. The eyes 240, 242, eyebrows 241, 243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248, 250, and hair 252 and the numbers and letters 260 are all interchangeable in terms of placement on the head 234 or torso 222.

[0040] The eyes 240, 242, eyebrows 241, 243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248, 250, are made from the hook type material of a hook-and-loop fastener system. The hair 252 is attached to a piece of hook type material of a hook-and-loop fastener system. The material on most of the outer surface of the doll/stuffed toy 220 is a soft fabric material having small loops of thread exposed at its surface. The hooks of the hook-and-loop fastener system engage these loops of material to retain the removable and replaceable features in place on the head 234 and torso 222 of the doll/stuffed toy 220.

[0041] FIG. 6 shows the doll/stuffed toy 220 of FIG. 5 with the facial features (eyes 240, 242, eyebrows 241, 243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248, 250) removed from its head 234 and torso 222, which is readily done by a young child.

[0042] FIG. 7 shows the doll/stuffed toy 220 with the facial features (eyes 240, 242, eyebrows 241, 243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248, 250) replaced onto the head 234 and torso 222, in a completely different pattern. The facial features on the head 234 show a somewhat different facial expression than in FIG. 5.

[0043] FIG. 8 shows the doll/stuffed toy 220 with new facial features (eyes 240a, 242a, eyebrows 241a, 243a, nose 244a, mouth 246a, ears 248a, 250a) replaced onto the head 234 and torso 222, including different hair 252a. The facial features on the head 234 show a somewhat different facial expression than in FIG. 5, and is generally recognizable as being similar to a female.

[0044] FIG. 9 again shows the doll/stuffed toy 220 having the removable and replaceable facial features (eyes 240, 242, eyebrows 241, 243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248, 250) and the numbers and letters 260 in a completely different and unusual pattern. The facial features are not necessarily on the head. Accordingly, the doll/stuffed toy 220 does not have a normal readily recognizable a facial expression. The random and unusual placement of all of these features might be quite funny to a child, thus providing entertainment for the child.

[0045] Reference will now be made to FIG. 10, which shows a third preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, as indicated by the general reference numeral 320. The re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 320 is similar to the second preferred embodiment re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 220, except that the plurality of external components 330 are removable and attachable to the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 320 by means of at least one magnet disposed in the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 320. More specifically, the plurality of external components 330 are removable and attachable to the head 334, the torso 322, the left and right arms 324, 326, and the left and right legs 328, 330, by means of a magnet 340 disposed in the head 334, by means of a magnet 342 disposed in the torso 322, by means of a magnet 344 disposed in the left arm 324, by means of a magnet 346 disposed in the right arm 326, by means of a magnet 348 disposed in the left leg 328, and by means of a magnet 350 disposed in the right leg 330. The plurality of external components are made from a suitable ferrous-based magnetically attractable material so as to be attracted by the magnets 340, 342, 344, 346, 348 and 350.

Reference will now be made to FIG. 11, which shows a fourth preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, as indicated by the general reference numeral 420. The re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 420 is similar to the third preferred embodiment re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 320, except that the plurality of external components 430 that are removable and attachable to the head 434, the torso 422, and the left and right arms 424, 426, are magnetic. A least a portion of the re-configurable doll 420, more specifically the head 434, the torso 422, and the left and right arms 424, 426, are made from a suitable ferrous-based magnetically attractable material so as to be attracted by the magnetic removable and replaceable components 430.

[0046] Reference will now be made to FIG. 12, which shows a fifth preferred embodiment of the re-configurable doll/stuffed toy according to the present invention, as indicated by the general reference numeral 520. The re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 520 is similar to the first preferred embodiment re-configurable doll/stuffed toy 20, except that the left and right arms 524, 526, and the left and right legs 528, 530 are attached and in removable and replaceable relation on the torso 522. It can be seen that the doll/stuffed toy of the present invention allows a child to create numerous facial expressions and appearances by attaching and removing various facial features. Additionally, various numbers and letters can be used on any part of the doll/stuffed toy for educational and entertainment purposes. The doll/stuffed toy therefore encourages children’s imagination and creativity, and develops their social skills in terms of recognizing and expressing emotions and feelings.

[0047] The doll/stuffed toy is preferably made from soft, durable flexible material. The interchangeable components may be made from fabric or plastic, and ideally would come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors to allow for a wide variation in the appearance of the doll/stuffed toy.

[0048] In an alternative embodiment (not illustrated), it is contemplated that the various features could be retained in place on the doll/stuffed toy by means of a small magnet on the features and a co-operating iron-based metal structure within the doll/stuffed toy; or vice-versa the features could be at least partially made from an iron-based material and a co-operating magnetic structure within the doll/stuffed toy.

[0049] FIG. 13 shows a storage container that is used in conjunction with the doll/stuffed toy of the present invention. The storage container 500 has a number of compartments 502 for receiving and retaining like external components 530 segregated one from another, and an openable and closeable lid to retain all of the items within the storage container.

[0050] Other variations of the above principles will be apparent to those who are knowledgeable in the field of the invention, and such variations are considered to be within the scope of the present invention. Further, other modifications and alterations may be used in the implementation of the present invention without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A re-configurable doll for use as a teaching aid or an article of entertainment, said re-configurable doll comprising:
   a torso; a head attached to said torso;
   arms and legs attached to said torso; and,
   a plurality of external components removably attachable to said re-configurable doll.

   eyebrows 241, 243, nose 244, mouth 246, ears 248, 250, and hair 252 and the numbers and letters 260 are all interchangeable in terms of placement on the head 234 or torso 222.
2. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components are removably mountable on the head of said re-configurable doll by means of a hook and loop fastening system.

3. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components are removably mountable on said re-configurable doll by means of at least one magnet disposed in said doll, and wherein said plurality of external components are attracted by said at least one magnet.

4. The re-configurable doll of claim 3, wherein said plurality of external components are magnetically attached to the re-configurable doll by means of a magnet disposed in the head of said doll, and wherein said plurality of external components are attracted by said magnet.

5. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components are magnetic and wherein at least a portion of said re-configurable doll is made from a magnetically attractive material.

6. The re-configurable doll of claim 5, wherein said plurality of external components are magnetic and wherein at least a portion of the head of said re-configurable doll is made from a magnetically attractive material.

7. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said head has an outer covering comprising a soft fabric material.

8. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said re-configurable doll comprises teddy bear.

9. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said re-configurable doll comprises a human-like figure.

10. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components comprise a plurality of facial features.

11. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components comprise eyes, ears, a nose, hair, eyebrows, and a mouth.

12. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components comprise letters and numbers.

13. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said plurality of external components comprise random shapes.

14. The re-configurable doll of claim 1, wherein said arms and legs are attached and in removable and replaceable relation on said torso.

15. A teaching aid for learning about facial anatomy and expressions, said teaching and comprising:
   a torso;
   a head attached to said torso;
   arms and legs attached to said torso;
   a plurality of external components removably mountable on the head of said re-configurable doll; and,
   a storage container for receiving and retaining said plurality of external components, said storage container having a plurality of compartments.

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