

Conference Paper

Multimodality and Polyculturalism of Modern Design

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Abstract

Drawing on the means and methods of classical art, design creates its own plastic language, forms of communicative practice, and methodology. Design goes beyond traditions, opening new life-changing opportunities, and catering for a variety of human needs. This article analyzes the limitations and problems of linguistic corpora utilization and attempts to solve them. The analysis revealed that among the main advantages of a significant part of the corpora, the possibility of analyzing large text fragments to determine their frequency of use in different contexts, as well as the high quality and speed of information processing can be noted, which contributes to time savings while working with corpora. In addition, a high degree of objectivity of studies using the corpus methodology is achieved with the help of wide possibilities for verifying quantitative data. Among the main limitations of most of the corpora we indicated the impossibility of discursive marking of the corpus, paid access to the corpus data or the limitations of the data available for work and the lack of meaningful context. The computer program Linguistica providing the basis for a web application of the same name, is designed to create different types of linguistic corpora: research and training, monolingual and multilingual and others. Linguistica web application can also contribute to fulfilling the research projects of teachers and students specializing in linguistics as well as to increasing the attractiveness of the electronic environment of the university.

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1. Rationale of the Study

The physical spatial environment, "the second nature", is a creation and reflection of social being and social consciousness and an illustration of the close relationship between the material and the spiritual (moral, intellectual) dimensions of society. It mirrors changes in philosophical, scientific and cultural views as visualized in spatial structures. Compared with architecture, landscaping and applied arts, design is now exerting a greater influence on the semantics and aesthetics of the urban environment. Responding efficiently to the needs and wants of society, authorities and business, to economic and political circumstances and fads and fashions, objects of design reflect

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technological achievements, trends in various spheres, and consumer demands and tastes.

Design is genetically linked with fine and applied arts, architecture and crafts, but it has developed into an aesthetic form-creating activity in its own right and is involved in economic and production processes. In contrast to art as the realm of the sensible, subjective and irrational, design uses a rational, objective and structured approach employing its own creativity toolkit. Based on the laws of Classic Arts and drawing from their means and methods, design creates its own visual language and forms of communicative practice, and its own methods and means going beyond traditions and opening up new life-changing opportunities and meeting human needs.

The objective of this article is to identify the qualities of multimodality in design practice allowing for societal demands, and those of polyculturalism in the language of forms, meanings and signs sought-after by consumers. These qualities enable design to combine a scientific approach and forms of artistic practice; utilitarian, communication and organizing functions with aesthetic, axiological and various other functions.

2. Research Methodology and Methods

The research methodology involves methods of cultural, art-historical and historical-genetic analysis. These enable one to retrace trends in design allowing for cultural contexts and societal outlooks, identify sociocultural issues in design, and analyze the evolution of design principles and culturally determined stylistic and paradigm views on form in design. The theoretical framework of the study is provided by articles and monographs written by cultural studies researchers, art critics, philosophers, and design theorists and practitioners on the problems and trends in this area of aesthetic creativity.

3. Design As a Product of Culture and a Factor that Forms Culture

We understand modality (from Latin 'modus' – measure, manner, shape) in relation to design practice as being determined by life circumstances and human needs; design as a multifaceted activity; as specific features of the object of design intended to make human existence comfortable. Such categories of modality as necessity, possibility and reality correspond precisely to the phases in the design process: analysis of the situation (the problem and its current relevance, the target audience, the environment, and the economic and technological capabilities and limitations); conceptual design; detailed

design and working drawings; models and prototypes to prove the concept, testing and evaluation by consumer.

Multifacetedness and pluralism (from Latin 'pluralis', concerning many) are also the immanent properties of design associated with the integrative nature of this creative activity addressing a wide range of the problems concerning both aesthetic form generation and engineering, technological, ergonomic, economic, sociological and psychological issues, as well as the special role of form generation and its purpose in the human history. Whereas works of architecture created over centuries reflected the technological capabilities of the society, worldview ideals and religious, political and social changes, and works of fine and applied arts captured images of different times becoming chronicles and then objects of study for archeologists, anthropologists, art study scholars and historians, design from the outset sought to find, create, discover and disseminate new cultural forms rather than to conserve them. A.N. Lavrentyev noted, "Design is at the same time a product of culture, a tool of cultural construction, and a factor that actively forms culture" [1].

4. Overview of Research Concerning Design Theory

According to Adrian Forty, in the 19th – early 20th century, design helped to make new technologies and objects (electricity, radio, gas ovens, washing machines, etc.) less threatening for the consumer, contributing to overcome the disapproval of the rejection of innovations and alienation of people from the products of technological advancement, introducing technical novelties into everyday life. The scholar reflected on how ideas or attitudes acquired a physical, material appearance. Thanks to the objects of design (domestic appliances), housework came to be positioned and perceived by housewives as "a voluntary expression of love", rather than unrewarding and degrading chores [2]. Design is not about the development of spatial objects, but as the US designer, philosopher and anthropologist Victor Papanek put it, "Design is the conscious and intuitive effort to create meaningful order" [3].

Various design theorists point to the communicative character of design as the most important quality of this activity in general and of the object of design in particular. As far back as 1957, George Nelson wrote, "Every design is in some sense a social communication, and what matters is not so much the importance of the object as the emotional intensity with which the essentials have been explored and expressed." He noted that a major design property of any product is the honesty of its inner essence [4]. "Design is a communicative practice, the product of which is a message embodied in

the object, and the goal is to produce an impression with the user («consumer» sounds incorrect: an existential value cannot be «consumed», it may be cultivated in a way of life)”, concludes G.N. Lola in her monograph in 2011 [5].

Indeed, design on the global scale and in its socio-cultural essence is a communicator between the manufacturing industry making depersonalized mass products and the subject, a unique inimitable entity with his/her expectations, needs, dreams, and tastes. In design, the communicative function of the object is becoming increasingly more important than the utilitarian one. Form in design is not about harmonization, aesthetics and composition, it is a message, a clear way of interaction with the object, rationality and, above all, positioning of certain ideas.

5. Interpretation of the Results

Design as an aesthetic form-creation activity has become a global phenomenon not only from the viewpoint of the universal design methods and criteria, latest tendencies, trends, and unification of form, but also in terms of communicative objectives and possibilities. Design is involved in economic and production processes and influences the economies, marketing, policies and environmental issues [6]. Competition among manufacturers and service providers boils down to design, namely the impression produced by the image of the object, the presentation of the offer and object, and the clear and compelling communication with the client by means of graphic and web design. Technical characteristics being the same, it is the design that determines motivation and choice, stimulates the client and creates added value. Design facilitates technical progress and advances the civilization. This is the sphere where mass consumption goods are created – from cars to domestic appliances, furniture, various gadgets, utensils, clothing, etc.

Translation of ideas is, perhaps, the most important mission of design. Modernism was oriented towards mass production, rationality, standardization and unification, strict functionality and good form. Postmodernism is oriented towards the consumer and consumption: form should be meaningful and provoke emotions. The modernist slogan “form follows function” is replaced with the “form follows emotion” [7], “form swallows function” [8], “feeling follows form” [9], or “form follows meaning” [10]. In the consumer society of the 1960s, novelty, style, aestheticism and imagery of the object were more important than its reliability, functionality, durability and cost. The demand was for things «for the heart», rather than for «the need», for things which can help change and demonstrate one’s image and lifestyle. Instead of the industrial production paradigm,

postmodernism has come up with an idea of the contextuality and communicative nature of the thing. Culture starts to be considered an aggregate of multi-layered texts (including visual signs and symbols), rather than as an aggregate of values and spirituality. Text is a means of communication, as it may be cited and rephrased, and instead of the stable picture of the world we have pluralism, the multitude of opinions and truths [11].

Ideas realized in design – commercial, social, artistic and environmental – reflect the time and run ahead of it. Today the intensive and extensive development of the virtual information environment and its increasing influence on the minds enhances the role of digital technologies and, again, of design (graphic, communication, web-design, photo-design...). Virtual space is easily accessible to all and everyone and it copies, duplicates, but also augments the reality. This era of information and globalization gives rise to new paradigms of culture and education. The educational environment is changing dramatically, the role of the media space is gaining importance, and the chances for retrieving any information from any point in the world and engaging in continuing education at any age are expanding. The means of design help arrange and adapt information for perception, enable one to model processes, situations and spatial objects, and conduct experimental studies. The logic and form in which the content is presented have become the objects of design. We can draw a parallel with A. Forty to the effect that today's design also helps humanize the virtual space, making it understandable and accessible for the consumer by means of form creativity, interactivity, and customization [12].

To convey meanings, ideas and messages we need a universal understandable language which should have polycultural qualities. We need to be open to new knowledge and experiences of various cultures. As an aesthetic form-creation activity, design addresses issues of styling. Style is a quality of form, a stable unity of form-making elements and a commonality of imagery, means of artistic expression and creative techniques. Historically, style has always been determined by the objective factors: climatic conditions, traditions, worldviews, religious and political principles. The historical styles existed for centuries and were associated with the “grassroots” determining visual forms of any scale.

With the onset of the era of design, the number of styles, the frequency of their change, and their simultaneous co-existence in one or several countries demonstrate the pluralism of forms and concepts according to the individual's taste. This is connected with mass production and development of transport, means of communication and international interactions, and with inter-penetration of cultures, economic potentialities and

competition. It should be noted that whereas inter-group or inter-ethnic communication may experience confrontations, prejudices or tensions, immersion into the material culture of another nation provokes research interest, encourages experimentation, and helps acquire new competences, sensations and impressions. Physical distance enables one to focus only on the aesthetics and functions of the material forms separated from their owners and carriers.

Special attention to the human factor in design provides scope for self-expression, but now for the consumer and not for the creator/artist. Functionalism, minimalism, suprematism, constructivism, etc. have combined and unified the visual languages proposing a kind of Esperanto which all understand, a logical and appropriate language at all times in different countries. Despite the surge of interest in art design and fancy for ethnic styles, polycultural objects demonstrating a minimalistic universal solution appear to be more sustainable, “ever in vogue”, and long lasting [6]. The 21st century is called the century of “iPhone design”, i.e. the object performs maximum functions, it is versatile and simple in control and adjusts to the needs and characteristics of the consumer while occupying little space, disappearing and making room for life.

The polyculturalism of design also manifests itself in its functioning as an international universal visual language of communication. It acts as a catalyst of commercial success and technical progress, demonstrates the success of the society, it is a business card of the country, company or the individual. The designer creates for the consumers and is often unaware of the addressee, being guided only by the social profile. Accordingly, the designer should be able to anticipate their expectations and tastes, both meeting the needs of various social groups and levelling out any social differences. The use of participatory methods assists in targeting objects and ensures demand for them. The designer also needs to be broadly competent and able to ‘speak’ the languages of many professions to coordinate the work of the participants in the design process. The diversity and, at the same time, unity of professional roles urges the designer’s thinking to inner discourse and reflection.

6. Conclusion

Design as a scholarly discipline strives to base itself on logic and to use methods of scientific cognition relying on various theoretical and empirical studies. Any project starts with an analysis of a variety of conditions and is based on the systems and environmental approaches. However, design combines both objective and subjective principles. This makes it different from classical science, which tends towards objectivity

and elimination of subjective factors as a guarantee of the truth of knowledge. The object of design cannot exist out of time and environment, without its creator and his position, and without consumer demand; it should fit into the historical context and the existing visual language, meeting the needs and wants of the target audience.

The paradigms of rational design thinking are based on multimodality, which is due to the integrative and interdisciplinary character of this activity reflecting various demands, views and needs of society. The polyculturalism of design manifests itself in the unification of the experiences of various cultures in the methodology and plastic language, in the versatility and rationality of its solutions and approaches, and in the use of the participation and customization methods. These qualities enable design to combine a scientific approach and forms of artistic practices.

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