HOW ABOUT USING A METAPHOR FOR DESIGN THINKING AND CREATIVITY IN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDIO?

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Abstract

Generally, the lack of disconnection and creativity in transforming the abstract into concrete is an important problem area in the design education. For this reason, conceptual thinking is one of the most creative and linking design methods applied recently. In this context, “Metaphors”, which by definition are especially suitable for imaginary and different thinking, offer a variety of possibilities for changing and transforming concepts, by enabling to approach design problems from surprising perspectives. Metaphors, which have also an important place in the interior design of architecture recently, play a key role both in analysis and synthesis stages. And also metaphors have a simplifying and guiding function in increasing the readability, forming the relationship of knowledge networks, interpreting, and enabling to produce innovative ideas during the design process.

This paper aims of studying the potential of metaphors as a design tool for the interior architecture during the early stages of design approach. The study includes the findings of the series of studies involving interior architectural design students who were asked to use a metaphor in the context of their specific project concepts with their own design experience.

As a result, the study explores for different ways to create a level of cognitive awareness in the problem solving stage in design and to create goals for more creative and innovative processes.

Keywords: Metaphor, Interior Design, Design Thinking, Abstraction, Creativity.

1 INTRODUCTION

Design is a process that is hard to systematize or typologize. Designs are the result of different approaches, influences and a trial-and-error process, especially when students are taking their first steps in the world of concept generation and design [1].

In parallel with the conditions of today, in an environment where experience is important, where boundaries are obscured and conceptual thinking is becoming dominant, studies are underway for new searches with different design approaches. Therefore exploring new ways of design thinking can help interior architecture students lighten the complexity of design process and enhance their level of cognitive awareness. It can also support their discovery of individual approaches and innovative design solutions.

With the assumption that the design consists of a fluid and dynamic process, it is very important to be able to make connections in this process in order to express the idea behind the design and to transform the abstract to concrete in a creative way. In this study metaphors used as a connection and designing tool that provides the transforming the abstract into concrete and gaining the ability to perceive and transfer.

Metaphors are not just a matter of language; they are also a matter of thought and action. Metaphorical thought is not a logical linear mode of thinking. Therefore, metaphors appear to be very valuable and important tools for an interior architecture that searches for unique situations and a new reality and makes use of both rational thinking and imagination at the same time [2].

This paper aims of studying the potential of metaphors as a design tool for the interior architecture during the early stages of design approach. The study includes the findings of the series of studies involving interior architectural design students who were asked to use a metaphor in the context of their specific project concepts with their own design experience at Istanbul Aydin University (Faculty of Architecture and Design, Department of Interior Architecture)
2 METAPHOR, DESIGN AND CREATIVITY

The concept of design brings with it an important concept such as creativity. Creativity leads the imagination, ideas, perceptions, accumulations, and emotions to gain a new dimension with design. For this reason, the creative design process feeds on past experiences and encourages the student to think, connect or relate and synthesize [3].

Every design begins with a search for an idea or for an intuitive understanding of how an assignment should be solved. This design idea is the start of a journey which is consist of a variety of effective approaches, sources of inspiration and ways of creativity [1].

The most common problem in interior architectural education is the difficulty in transferring theoretical knowledge to the practice at design studios. The process of transforming abstract into concrete by linking information with more joyful methods will offer the interior architectural design students more freedom in creativity.

Conceptual thinking is one of the most creative and linking design methods applied recently. In this context, "Metaphors", which by definition they are especially suitable for imaginary and different thinking, offer a variety of possibilities for changing and transforming concepts, by enabling to approach design problems from surprising perspectives.

Since Aristotle, a large number of philosophers and researchers indicate the positive role played by metaphors on creativity, primarily in art, subsequently, in science and other disciplines. It is seen that recently the interest in the relationship between metaphorical thinking and creativity in almost every field is progressively increasing. The essence of metaphor is understanding, experiencing, thinking and designing one kind of thing in terms of another [2].

Metaphors, which have also an important place in the interior design of architecture recently, play a key role both in analysis and synthesis stages. And also metaphors have a simplifying and guiding function in increasing the readability, forming the relationship of knowledge networks, interpreting, and enabling to produce innovative ideas during the design process.

3 METAPHOR AS A DESIGN TOOL IN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STUDIO

In the current design education, the creative connection process between knowledge and practice becomes more important than the result product; intuitive, specific, non-technical methods are required. In this context, interdisciplinary information flow and conceptual thinking in design education are thought to be beneficial in terms of method diversity [3].

A metaphor allows us to understand one concept in terms of another, enriching our mental imagery and imbuing concepts with meaningful attributes. Metaphors are well studied in design, for example, in branding, communication and the design of computer interfaces [4]. So what about using metaphor as a design tool in interior architectural design studios?

Here the metaphor -usually used as a figure of speech in the literary field- represents a way of communicating design concepts and moving conceptual models from a domain to another one. It is a movement of transformed meanings, it is an conceptual and contextual knowledge [5].

It will be particularly helpful for students in finding a first solution concept as a starting point for further variations. Such an approach allows full exploration of the design space and also acts as a map for those who are less experienced in design problem solving [4].

Thus, interior architectural design education will include both individual experiences and theoretical knowledge as well as the opportunity to develop new understanding and narrative skills and turn into an interdisciplinary environment.

4 METHODOLOGY AND CONTENT

This study aims to contribute to the design education by gaining the ability to perceive and transfer, using the selected metaphor as a tool, based on conceptual thinking, by selecting the cuisines of different countries as the subject of interior design. In the studios, only some steps have been determined in the process which consists of students’ starting points, methods to be used and result products. As a result, especially the relations between metaphors and their designs are examined.
In the study, first of all the students were asked to select the kitchen of the restaurant they want to make. The students were then asked to choose a metaphor to use in their restaurant plans. Within the scope of the study, students are given the task of designing the texture, color and furniture of the spaces and planning of their plans with the selected metaphor suitable for the cuisine and cultural theme of their restaurant.

In this method, the students have done research on the metaphor of their choice and tried to reflect their metaphors to the plan in order to adapt to the current issue. Metaphor is reflected in the plan fiction and also the details such as furniture, textures and colors.

The most important point that needs to be taken into account in the process of planning is that the metaphors should not be used directly on the plan (without any change). For this reason, a 3-step abstraction study was planned on the metaphor. In the first step, they were asked to find a visual describing the metaphors of their choice. In the second step, it was asked to abstract the formal language / symbolic form of the image describing their metaphors. In the third step, it was expected that the chosen theme (kitchen) and the metaphor will be reinterpreted with the reflections on the designer by their imaginations.

In the following, the plans were divided into various areas and so function schemes were created. As a result of the work of the students, some of them reflected the metaphors to the areas in the design of their plans and others reflected to the design of their furniture.

4.1 Steps of the Study

First of all, the student chooses one of the world culinary types and after which he chooses the type of culinary from the culture. By researching the selected metaphor, metaphorical meanings, formal transformations, their semantic meanings and their associations were elaborated as a study area. The detected forms and images were then reflected in the current layout. At this stage, the wall splits in the plan were used by reflecting the effects of metaphor on any or all of the furniture designs, interior furniture, textures, colors.

The following figure (Figure 1) summarizes the layout in the student studies:

- On the left side; there is selected international cuisine, step-by-step transformation of metaphor and related words / concepts. The first image is the visual representation of the metaphor and the second is the first imagery of the metaphor, and the third one is the closest version of the metaphor to be applied to the plan.
- In the middle, there is the metaphorically created plan drawing.
- On the right side, there are three-dimensional visuals of the spaces and fittings in which the metaphor is reflected.
In the following sections, the works of 8 students have been explained in detail and expressed with the visuals via the given template.

### 4.1.1 Work 1

In this study, which deals with the Mediterranean cuisine, the student has studied the metaphor of the “Sea” on the given plan. According to the data obtained by using curved forms divider elements and chambers of furniture were designed with this system. The plan form of the private dining area inside the restaurant is designed as a waveform, while the entrance and bar sections are designed with circular forms. Also, here, the student shapes the sea metaphor on the column coverings.

![Figure 2. Work Scheme 1](image)

### 4.1.2 Work 2

In this study, a student who makes Chinese cuisine, has chosen the “Ying-Yang” metaphor. In the current plan, she has separated the reception counter and lodge areas with the difference of level. Student also designed seating elements with curved lines and designed a bench that evokes the form Ying-Yang and reflected on the plan.

![Figure 3. Work Scheme 2](image)
4.1.3 Work 3

In this restaurant design, which includes Spanish cuisine, the student takes the metaphor of the “Full Moon” and reflects the moonlight reflections on the sea which are evoked by the metaphor and reflects these forms to the areas on the plan with the curved lines that he developed. The sphere form of the moon was used in the selection of furniture and the design of the chamber spaces.

Figure 4. Work Scheme 3

4.1.4 Work 4

A student working on a Chinese restaurant chose "Evergreen Magnolia" as a metaphor for her plan shaping. She designed a furniture using curvilinear waves which is located in the crown of the flower and used them in chambers. Also, it is seen that spherical forms are applied in the bar section of the design.

Figure 5. Work Scheme 4

4.1.5 Work 5

Another student working for Indian cuisine, dealt with the “Marigold Flower” plant as a metaphor, which is present in the cultural and ethnic background of India. She created a linearity that mimics the
continuous intertwined leaf movements in the crown of the flower and deformed this form and used it in the bar section which will be located in the center of the restaurant. She also used colors and textures that reflect similar curvilinear forms and ethnic origin in his furniture and the rest.

4.1.6 Work 6

The student chose the “Collesium” structure in Rome / Italy as a metaphor in her restaurant with Mediterranean cuisine. In his design, he applied the column and arch systems of the structure to both the plan and the sections on the vertical axis. In addition, these curvilinear forms have been used in furniture, bar section and chambers, and they have been reflected in the level differences in flooring and floor coverings in order to divide the units inside the restaurant.

4.1.7 Work 7

Another student, who works in French cuisine, chose the “Chain” form as a metaphor and isolated a link of the chain. In this way, he created a guide area in the central position of the restaurant and he reflected this form to his design by emphasizing the difference with the levels. The student, who also benefited from Brutalism, used column coatings and walls of the space as raw concrete. He has
developed divisive systems within the restaurant by mounting the chains on the floor by hanging them from the ceiling with hangers.

![Figure 8. Work Scheme 7](image)

### 4.1.8 Work 8

A student working French cuisine wanted to use the metaphor of “Love” by dealing with French culture. She designed the chamber furniture by dimensioning the heart imagery, in addition, a special dining area in curvilinear form is located in the plan.

![Figure 9. Work Scheme 8](image)

### 4.2 Outcomes of the Study

It is clear that, because of dealing with subjects like different design themes in a metaphoric way, students all enjoyed during the study. They have experienced the design process of turning abstract into concrete and discovered the idea behind an architectural product / space by concepts. They all learned a way of conceptual thinking by metaphors, transforming the data and forming new relationships of knowledge networks. They have gained skills of perception, designing and presenting via using the creative architectural language.
The subjective metaphors created by abstraction in each study acted as a catalyst for the transformation of knowledge and the production of new data. And the images created by perception, filtering and interpretation with the stimulating effects of the homework given in this study and developed processes of expression provides new data production.

The most important point of this process, metaphor is a viewpoint in which scenarios and needs are considered as a whole. In this way, it was aimed that providing the designer with a pleasant design and creation process, as well as creating a space for the user to spend a pleasant time.

In this study, metaphor emerged as a very nourishing and supportive case for revitalization, interpretation and design phases. It is seen that it is possible to create a more creative design world by using metaphor in a way of creating certain boundaries in design but also discovering that rich world in design. Also, metaphor was observed to be an important tool to create spaces with a balanced and specific design language instead of complex and unidentified spaces.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The contemporary design environment, along with interdisciplinary developments and emerging new approaches, requires a new terminology in terms of semantic and visual expression tools. In this context, interior and architectural designs even architectural and interior design education processes are now seen as areas of new conceptualization.

Metaphorical reasoning on conceptual thinking enables the identification of unobserved similarities despite the existence of apparent differences. As a result of this, conceptual meaning shows up and new categories of knowledge are created.

Along the process, the students were able to transform abstract metaphorical expressions into concrete projects in interior architectural design studio, and to integrate different metaphorical ideas into a creative solution.

It is also seen that this kind of studies contributes the development of some important skills such as pre-design investigation, design thinking, creative thinking, visual communication. And they provide unlimited possibilities by enabling to approach design problems from untraditional viewpoints.

Consequently, based on the findings of this study or this kind of studies which based on creativity, implications for design education should be taken into consideration. Such approaches in design studios may help guide the design process and contribute to produce original solutions. The main purpose is not any result focused on the object or the subject, but rather a productive data platform that includes paradoxes, open to innovations and changes, creative ideas and processes.

REFERENCES


