Metaphor Identifier: A tool or parameter to identify and measure value in interior design projects

Martin L KATOPPO
Head of Interior Design Department
Faculty of Design and Planning
Universitas Pelita Harapan, Karawaci
INDONESIA
martin.katoppo@uph.edu

Cindy MELISSA
Interior Design Department
Faculty of Design and Planning
Universitas Pelita Harapan, Karawaci
INDONESIA
cindimelissa@hotmail.com

Abstract: The problem in our (post)modern world is everything changes so fast. The new became irrelevant within second as others lining up to be another option for us. To make the matter worst those options are served juxtaposed one to another. This extreme progressive fact dictates everything in our everyday life, and design is no exception. On a built and designed environment, interior design surely is one of the major contributors to these excessive and rapid changes. Thus the meaning and value behind interior design project should be question through experimental research revealing its process of becoming. The experimental research will use a method we called Metaphor Identifier. We developed this method as we designer tend to use metaphor when forming and explaining the concept in the beginning of interior design project. While served as an opening we also examined how metaphor transcends throughout the whole process of becoming, from abstraction unto its physical implementation. The experimental research will use four real contemporary interior design projects in Indonesia, one conceptual interior design project, and one interior design projects by renowned designer, in which three stages of analysis will be conducted: (1) target domain/abstraction (measuring category of metaphor in the design: intangible, tangible and combined); (2) transformation (measuring abstraction transformation through basic elements of the design: form, texture and color); (3) source domain/design manifestation (measuring metaphor deepness: apparent literality, dormant literality and transcendent). Vice versa Metaphor Identifier could detect the meaning and value by reversing the research process starting from the finished design without having any knowledge of it. There are three purposes of this experimental research: (1) to identify interior design process of becoming (2) to identify and measure value in interior design projects (3) to evaluate and to redefine our understanding of Interior Design in this new era of constant and dynamic changes.

Key Words: meaning and value, metaphor, Metaphor Identifier, redefining Interior Design
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Opening discourse: Metaphor, Metaphor in design, Metaphor Identifier

The problem in our (post)modern world is everything changes so fast. The new became irrelevant within second as others lining up to be another option for us. To make the matter worst those options are served juxtaposed one to another. This extreme progressive fact dictates everything in our everyday life, and design is no exception.

On a built and designed environment, interior design apart from architecture surely is one of the major contributors to these excessive and rapid changes. These concerning the facts that interior design nowadays was built as temporary design with only 2-3 years of age before it was replaced, demolished or at it best renovated. Interior as intimate space containing personal and public daily activities is in its nature for always in a state of constant and dynamic of ‘becoming’. As stated above the situation is worsened by the zeitgeist leading the world: postmodernism, where everything invent to push acceleration beyond belief, human condition especially the state of connectedness, where boundaries tends to be eliminate.

So what should interior design and we interior designer respond to this?

Our research tried to investigate these matters through the process of becoming itself, thus the position of the designer and its results are important. Interior Design as a products results from the mind of its Interior Designer and to investigate such creative minds we developed tools we called Metaphor Identifier. It began in early 2011 as a research for identifying metaphor and it strength in interior design projects. Intrigued by concepts used in almost every design and based on argument that concepts used by designers as metaphorical language to describe, the research then tried to compose strategies for revealing how metaphor worked from the very early stage of designing, its design process and as an evaluation on its finished design.

Metaphor
The first comprehensive discussion about Metaphor probably derived from Aristotle Poetics. Metaphor used as analogy or representative from something that we wanted to describe. It is used from mere simplification to poetic used or even to construct meaning. In its broadest sense every form of exchange,


2 In the discourse Aristotle defined metaphor as something to be found in a given name that actually belongs to something else; transference from genus to species, or based on analogy. See: Bywater, Ingram (transl.).1941. Basic works of Aristotle. New York: Random House.
identity transference or terminology transposition could be within the characteristic of metaphorical. Thus, metaphor is not only just a semantic form but a fundamental character of human linguistic relation with the world. There are at least three different idea of Metaphor derived from Aristotle explanation: (1) as substitution for a literal condition (2) as borrower from its original context (3) as deviation from usual using. Thus metaphor usually have implicit meaning that should be read more carefully as it is not just representing literally of what is actually shown.

Lakoff and Johnson in *Metaphor We Live By* argued that metaphor was actually form naturally in human minds and becoming potential based for their whole conceptual system, thus will influence everything from the way they are thinking to (finally) what they are doing. Therefore Lakoff and Johnson believed that metaphor was more than just a system of poetic language, but it is the language itself as there was not a single word that was not a metaphor, as every word actually represents something that we want to describe. Furthermore Lakoff and Johnson called their system of metaphor as conceptual construction, which they divide into 2 main aspects: (1) Source domain as the metaphor itself, or the representation of the thing itself, simply put as the concrete form; and (2) Target domain as something that worked and should be understood behind the metaphor, simply put as the abstraction. Thus, metaphor is an abstraction that is represent through concrete form, thus whenever there is connection between source domain and target domain, metaphor will exist.

**Metaphor in design**

Designer knows better in the light of this, as designer always creatively created something from abstraction to its actual implementation. We know it as concept or idea. Antoniades in *Poetic of Architecture* argued that this concept or ideas usually based from three categories of metaphors: Intangible Metaphor, Tangible Metaphor and Combined Metaphor. The first could be understood as a concept, an idea, a human condition or a particular quality. The second associated strictly from some visual or material character, while the latter was when the conceptual and the visual overlap or juxtaposed with each other. In most cases tangible metaphor refers to a noun as it is close to literal expression and intangible metaphor refers to an adjective as it is close to experience.

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3. In his *Poetics* Aristotle describe that metaphor identified with three things: (1) Metaphor is something attributed to a noun (2) Metaphor defined in a context of movement or as *epiphora*, thus metaphor valid for every terminology transposition (3) Metaphor is always a identity transposition (*allotrios*) in which identity belongs to something else. In this case metaphor worked as deviation. See: Bywater, Ingram (transl.). 1941. *Basic works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House.
5. At the discussion of postmodern philosophy, metaphor believed to have even greater meaning of what should have been the closest system that human has to the truth. As the last discussion of philosophy falls and depends deeply unto language and literature category, at some point the quest for the truth now focusing on how we communicate. Metaphor originated from linguistic becomes one of the strongest alternatives in constructive tradition of postmodernism to be analyze for understanding truth. See more: Sugiharto, I. Bambang. 1996. *Postmodernisme*: 16, 28-32, 102-110.
8. Designer tends to use tangible metaphor for their direct communication as it is more easy and simplified for its audience to understand the connection between the metaphor used and the physical implementation. This explanation does not mean that designer did not use intangible metaphor as from what we learned it is almost every designer has their intangible metaphors, but it is more difficult to be translated. See: Antoniades, Anthony C. 1992. *Poetics of Architecture: Theory of Design*: 31
Antoniades then continued mapping the metaphor strength level and its relation with design as shown below:\(^1\)

![Figure 1: The hierarchical significance of metaphor for critical and design purposes](source: Antoniades, Anthony C.1992. Poetics of Architecture: Theory of Design:31)

**Metaphor Identifier**

With all the argumentation above, we tried to compose a strategy to identifying metaphor and measuring its strength level in interior design projects:

![Figure 2: Theory translation towards composing tools for identifying metaphor and measuring its strength level in interior design projects](source: Antoniades, Anthony C.1992. Poetics of Architecture: Theory of Design:31)

As a tool attached and used in evaluating interior design projects we inserted the transformation process as a bridge of translation and information from concept to implementation. The transformation phase will be measured through interior design basic elements: (1) form, a three dimensional surface shaping the whole interior (2) texture, determining the surface quality and (3)
color, integrate the whole ambiance. Thus Metaphor Identifier will work on identifying metaphor and measuring its strength level in interior design projects as shown below (Fig.3):

Figure 3: Metaphor Identifier work flow

**Study Cases:** 4 real interior design local projects, 1 conceptual interior design project, 1 random interior design project from renowned interior designer

Our research on various study cases will demonstrate how Metaphor Identifier worked on interior design projects. Therefore we choose several interior design projects with its varied backgrounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Designer background</th>
<th>Project Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real Projects</td>
<td>A. BS</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Young designer at local renowned consultant</td>
<td>2011 - now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. NZ</td>
<td>Restaurant &amp; Café</td>
<td>Young designer at local renowned consultant</td>
<td>2011 completion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. SJ</td>
<td>Restaurant &amp; Café</td>
<td>Young designer at local renowned consultant</td>
<td>2011 completion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D. RB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conceptual Projects</td>
<td>E. FZ</td>
<td>Sport &amp; Health Fac.</td>
<td>Interior Design final year student</td>
<td>2011 finished as a proposed design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Projects</td>
<td>F. SF</td>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>Renowned designer</td>
<td>2010 completion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Interior design projects background study cases

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13 The research up until now already used 10 study cases, however for this paper it only used 6 study cases each representing real interior design projects designed by local consultant, conceptual interior design project from student’s final project and real interior design project from renowned designer. Each was selected carefully to serve the aim of the paper: showing how our Metaphor Identifier tool worked on various degree of projects complexity and designers background. For the respect of those included in this research, all projects will be using only initials and all designers’ identity remains anonymous.

**Metaphor Identifier:** A tool or parameter to identify and measure value in interior design projects
The Metaphor Identifier were used for every projects and combined with vice versa metaphor strength analysis with the finished design as starting point to be examined by Focus Group Discussion (FGD) using qualitative controlled questionnaire. The example for complete analysis shown below (Fig.5) for one study case: BS.
Real Project A: BS
BS was designed by a young designer worked for local renowned consultant in Jakarta. The retail project was located in one of Jakarta sprawling malls and shopping center and will be for displaying Batik, traditional Indonesian clothing and fabrics, motif designed and drew by hands with specific traditional way to produce it on the fabric/surface cloth. The designer wanted to combine the traditional essence of Batik with modern world by representing and exploring Batik’s form and motif into its design, display, and space ambiance creating modern, elegance and exclusivity into it. By this brief explanation we can identified our target domain, the metaphor worked at BS: The intangible metaphor is: modern space/interpretation from the tradition, while the tangible metaphor: Batik’s form and pattern.

For the basic form BS used Batik’s pattern as the vocal point of the design, especially for decorative elements while for the whole space using functional and modern simple approach. The materials used for BS was a combination between woods and stainless as accentuation and modern materials such as wallpaper and gypsum. For color scheme, BS showed a combination dark brown color derived from the wood material and light color from paint finished gypsum, light brown wallpaper and travertine floor. These clearly showed the intention of its designer to transformed traditional Batik into modern, elegance and exclusive interpretation.

The analysis at source domain was drawn from 2 perspectives: the researcher perspective and the FGD (focus group discussion) perspective. The first one was to determine the presence of literality and existential virtue and the latter was to determine its detectable ratings. BS transformation analysis showed strong presence of literality from the used of Batik pattern but vague to the point of absence of virtue. This was concluded because of the domination of wood textures with dark brown color and the much of Batik pattern that were literally used. It was supported by the FGD answers in which they felt the design represented ethnic, Batik, cultural, traditional, eclectic, and decorative, Java, Jogja with only one answer of modern. The FGD answers was measured as detectable by others. Thus the result of the Metaphor strength at BS was apparent literality.

Real Project B: NZ
NZ was designed by a couple of young designers whom also owned the venue. NZ was located at eating and dining complex, Tangerang far south of Jakarta. The restaurant design intention should be displaying the exploration by the two designers. They wanted to transform formal character of fine dining restaurant into something more casual and fun. For achieving that they channeling ‘fun’ into their design experimentation and for representing space that can confined both formal character and ‘fun’ design experimental they chose old building style and ambiance. Thus we can identify our target domain, the metaphor worked at NZ: The intangible metaphor is: ‘fun’ design experimentation, while the tangible metaphor: old building style and ambiance.
NZ form clearly derived from the old building style with its exposed bricks, ceiling and wood materials and some of its furniture and door or window style. On the other hand the exploration showed the designer’s fun experimentation, for example through reinterpretation of materials using and lighting design. Materials used creatively in accordance with the color scheme that the designers want to achieve. Exposed bricks and woods dominated its ambiance with colors moving from heavy to light, juxtaposed to create an old but ‘fun’ ambiance at the same time. Here old translated as tradition, while ‘fun’ translated as channeling the old to the contemporary.

NZ transformation analysis showed that strong presence of literality as the old building style and ambiance could be seen visually clear and felt. It also showed presence of existential virtue. This was concluded by the analysis that designers experimentation to bring out ‘fun’ through form, material and color exploration into the old building style was succeed. In addition to that they also managed to insert ‘fun’ in matters of casual and relaxing sense to their fine dining restaurant. The FGD answers are more complex to decipher as they felt: comfort, rural, homey, warm, welcoming, country like, plantation, rustic, modern ethnic even grandma’s house. After thorough analysis with FGD we found that the existential virtue was not really grasp by them but the variation of answers still indicating presence of literality detection, thus we concluded that NZ existential virtue was absence from them. Thus the results of the Metaphor strength at NZ differ from what we research as transcendental to what the FGD concluded as apparent literality.

Real Project C: SJ
SJ was designed by a young designer worked for local renowned consultant in Jakarta. The restaurant was located in one of Jakarta malls. SJ was designed to give experience through the sense of smell as the restaurant served steak as the main course. The sense of smell was taken from the way that steak was roasted by jackfruit or maple wood. This then combined with alfresco dining concept derived from France idiom of en plein air to give ambiance of outdoor eating activities. With this information we can identify our target domain, the metaphor worked at SJ: The intangible metaphor is: experience through the sense of smell, while the tangible metaphor: al fresco dining concept.
SJ form was casual but in the same time prestigious. In accordance to the function as restaurant that served steak, SJ used abundance of wood logs with a rectangular form placed irregularly. It was used at the entrance, walls and ceiling. While the outdoor eating activities were represented with the using of synthetic plantation such as tree that placed at some point from the 1st floor throughout the 2nd floor and synthetic grass at the floor and wall with synthetic plantation on the ceiling. The color scheme was made contrast with the use of spot and hidden light and dark color furniture and floor.

SJ transformation analysis showed confusion either on the presence of literality or the presence of existential virtue. The alfresco translation was quietly recognizable from the use of natural materials such as woods, plantation and synthetic grass. But the problem emerged when one wants to feel the ambiance of outdoor eating as the lighting, color scheme and the other materials used as the other factors to create the whole ambiance was emphasizing indoor eating activities. While the virtues was translated by the designer with too strong literality using an array of woods, hanging on the ceiling, wall and also scattered as decoration. These then made confusion between expected experience through the sense of smell and a strong visual experience. The FGD answers confirmed that as they felt: explorative, tumultuous, disorder, garden, nature, fun, cold, café-like, heavy, crowded, chaotic, complex, complicated, and trapped. Thus we concluded that SJ presence of literality was vague towards none, with no existential virtues detected and it was not detectable by others. The metaphor strength at SJ was at the lower apparent literality category.

Real Project D: RB
RB was designed by experience designers as their own residential. RB also an idealism projects by its designers. RB design stemmed from the basic needs of dwelling and because of the budget limitation. RB was then designed with efficiency and tropical design approach. Because RB location is in the middle of kampong, RB translated the needs of efficiency and tropical design approach as kampong home blended contextually with its surroundings. Thus the metaphor worked at RB: The intangible metaphor is: efficiency, while the tangible metaphor: kampong and tropical home.

RB form derived from basic needs of dwelling as it was shown at the lay out arrangement, while on its 3D form RB clearly showed principles of tropical houses with its high pitched roof, extended terrace, a lot of openings and high ceiling. The materials used were from local materials such as: bamboo and bamboo mat, exposed bricks and ceiling and clay roof tiles. The color scheme derived from the natural colors of its materials sometimes unfinished or unpolished such as the wall finishing and the wood finishing.

The transformation analysis showed that RB had a presence of literality. RB design and form showed tropical design approach with pitched roof and extended terrace for facing dry and rainy seasons, natural
and cross ventilation, opening for natural light. Answering the intention of blending as kampong’s home RB used of local materials with raw finishing. This intention was not fully achieved, because RB design as whole still emerged as unique within its surroundings. Our analysis also showed the presence of existential of virtues from RB methods of construction and especially materials used. The FGD answers confirm presence of literality but vague presence of existential virtue: imaginative, inspiring, tropical house, exploration of local materials, functional, unfinished house, natural, calming, unique, and breezing. Thus the results of the Metaphor strength at RB differ from what we research as transcendental to what the FGD concluded as apparent literality.

Conceptual Project E: FZ
FZ was designed by Interior Design student in her final year as project for the final examination. FZ was a sport & health facilities with female as the sole target market or users. FZ was planned to be located at one of Jakarta biggest mall. With this in mind the designer molded a concept for the space ambiance and experience, derived from own analysis as: refresh, enthusiasm yet relaxing. By this brief explanation we can identified our target domain, the metaphor worked at FZ: The intangible metaphor is: ambiance of refreshing, enthusiasm yet relaxing, while the tangible metaphor: feminine design approach.

FZ form clearly pictured an organic flows shown in the lay out and organic pattern for the walls and ceiling design. The design as a whole showed a strong sense of refreshing especially from its color palette used: white, green and light brown. While on the materials the designer chose to use a combination of wood panels and parquets with other modern materials as gypsum, carpet, vinyl and granite tiles. The effects of organic form, its color palette and materials gave a strong modern contemporary design with exciting interpretation of the metaphors.

The first detection of FZ was its presence of existential virtues. Although a conceptual design, FZ could provoked a sense of refresh, enthusiasm yet relaxing at visual glance by its observer. As the visualization of its virtues was strong it presence of literality turned out to be vague. The designer intention of making it as female fitness and spa with organic design approach and smooth finishing did not quite relate to specific users, instead it created dialogue. The FGD answers confirmed this with variation of answers but mostly engaged with FZ’s virtues: bright, energetic, playful, spacious, fresh, clean, greenish, flowing, organic, refreshing, light, and natural. With these results FZ entered the next stage of Transcendental category as it was had an absence of literality (creating dialogue), strong presence of existential virtue but still detectable by others.

Real Project F: SF
SF was an interior design installation aiming to provoke emotional experience within its observer. Designed by renowned designer, SF is a part of retail space owned by renowned product brand. The designer
intention was to expressing something that did not have a form or design, but in the same time transcends the general idea of it, thus the combination would provoked emotion. It is invisible yet gave emotional experience. To achieved that the designer used snowflakes representation as he believed that it has the essence of natural phenomena with its invisible elements. With the explanation we can identified our target domain, the metaphor worked at SF: The intangible metaphor is: invisible yet gave emotional experience, while the tangible metaphor: snowflakes.

SF form as installation was placed at the window display engaging observer from the inside or the outside. The array and disorder arrangement of acrylic thin sticks immediately caught both observer visual attention and emotional experience. The all white color palette was used as emphasize and gave neutral sense to let the observer decide. The floor covered with blurred glass and lighted with zigzagging TS lamps. The entire ambiance is white contrasted by black carpet boundaries.

The project indicated absence of literality as the designer expected but in a sense to provoked dialogue and emotional experience through its observer, thus the presence of existential virtues emerged from this installation. Even more it was not clearly detected by others, as shown through the variation of FGD answers: winter, cold, chill, modern art installation, clean, chaotic, gripping, and dreading with only one answer piercing snowflakes. The answers showed degree of dialogue as they used adjectives to describe a project named very literal. SF then can be concluded as the best condition where metaphor worked as it showed absence of literality, strong presence of existential virtues and not detectable by others in a way provoking a dialogue or emotional experience within each own observer.

Closing discourse

Our experimental research using Metaphor identifier showed dynamic conclusion from the study cases. BS and SJ showed the strength level of metaphor at apparent literality. BS obviously falls into this category as it failed to show presence of existential virtue although its designer intended to. SJ because of the confusion of developing its tangible metaphor and excessive use of literal translation failed to deliver its designer intention. NZ and RB showed a difference category derived from the researcher conclusion as transcendental and the FGD conclusion as apparent literality. FZ could be predicted to be fall into transcendental category as it has advantage as conceptual project with little attention to budget and vast amount of time for designing. SF as the project from renowned designer succeeds in using metaphor at it best.

There are several conclusions that could be drawn from this: (1) SF showed maturity and smooth translation in its design because of the designer background comparing to what happened at BS, NZ and SJ. (2) Conceptual project should be expected at least to reach the first stage of transcendental category as shown with FZ. (3) Metaphor used by designer should be expressing clarity of its intention while in the same time arousing its observer through experience and dialogue with the space, as the research showed that metaphor worked both ways. RB and NZ failed to reach this, as from the backward process of metaphor identifier using FGD both projects only reach apparent literality. It also showed interesting facts, that both upgraded their category to transcendental when metaphor identifier was implied by the researcher. These were possible to happen because the researcher could analyze the transformation process with sufficient data from the designers. In other words the designers are revealing their secret. BS failed to upgrade its category because the literal translation used was clouding the virtue intention, while SJ was the extreme example of it. (4) Apart from the results, all six study cases showed that all designers
course of works were started with deliberate intention of using both tangible and intangible metaphor. This of course could not represent to every designer but it implying hope of awareness and wisdom in design.

At some point our metaphor identifier showed that metaphor was not used as a mere substitute or only as decorative function but rather showing a deviation. This is important because as metaphor deviates it will destruct the old system of logic and building the new one\textsuperscript{14} as shown in interior design projects with transcendental category. Ricoeur clarify this by moving metaphor position from its word framework to sentence framework. By doing this Ricoeur hoped for metaphor inventive and productive value. More over Ricoeur argued that the true value of metaphor will be shown if it is not only acted as the meaning but at the same time also acted as the reference for the meaning itself. Thus metaphor will be at the point of discourse away from its sentence framework and the framework itself.\textsuperscript{15} With this in mind he believed that we could move both ways from the symbol to the thing or vice versa to create discourse and sensed what he called split reference.\textsuperscript{16} Metaphor would have power to transfer as whole, redefining our perception and reorganize it into something new and in accordance with metaphor split reference, it will always be in a constant tensional truth.\textsuperscript{17} The extensive explanation shed some light to our metaphor identifier as a tool and its varied results from all of the study cases.

Responding to the extreme progressive changing challenge of our postmodern world, it is out of question to be pursuing timeless design. The spirit of this age will not let us do that. Thus what we can do as designer is leaving ‘reference’ as trace in our design that will left ‘design’ experience for us as the designer itself, the client and its user. In turn it will created tension aroused between those involved and the design. Meaning will be constantly change and dynamic as it will aroused dialogue, thus becoming will be too. The tension will give ways to designers’ secret while in the same time distancing it and new discourse will evolve. The design might be dissolved, vanished or demolished but the metaphor in its nature should be transform into the new set of logic for all. What remains is the experience for all, the tension and the push from metaphor that we all should seen design in a wiser ways even in our now postmodern world.

\textsuperscript{14} Sugiharto, I.Bambang.1996.\textit{Postmodernisme: tantangan bagi filsafat}: 103.
\textsuperscript{15} Ricoeur, Paul.1982. \textit{The Rule of Metaphor}:234.