

Typographic Expressions in Graphic Design Education

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Abstract

In this manuscript, the reflection of typographic expression training methods such as integration, resolution, transposition, disintegration, and lettering on students' design and learning processes was strived to be analyzed. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used altogether. The study group comprised of senior year Azad University Graphic and Architecture Faculty Visual Communication and Art students (10) who took the "Project Appliance" course. The group consists of volunteering students with elementary typography knowledge and typography skills who have not previously brought out creative, original, and new typography works. Students have designed posters as products before and after the training of typographic expression ways, respectively. Three experts graded the posters using a scoring rubric and answer key prepared by analysts. Evaluation results were analyzed with Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. A semi-structured interview was conducted after the training, and the data obtained were resolved by content analysis. By the research results, the products of students who have participated in the education of expression methods in typography were successful. Students have expressed to have progressed both professionally and personally. Themes such as creativity, feeling well, self-confidence, and satisfaction appeared in content analysis consisting of interview notes.

Keywords: Graphic Design Education; Graphic Design; Typographic Expressions; Typographic Training

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1. Introduction

Graphic design is a communication design. Graphic design transmits a message to the receiver with legible and visual two-dimensional images. Message design is usually used for advertising an industrial or an artistic product or a service. Sender conveys cognitive and affective messages to the receiver (Ambrose & Harris, 2006; Becer, 1997; Bowers, 1999; Koren & Meckler, 2001; Landa, 2018). There are two fundamental elements in graphic design. The first is typographic elements, and the second is visual elements. Typographic elements include and transmit linguistic information and letters, numbers, and punctuation marks, while visual elements are photographs and illustrations. Typography is the exclusive art and technique of forming type to make language visible (Lau & Chu, 2015). Typography, the subject of this manuscript, is a reflection of language processed as form and shape. Typography is the art of designed lettering. Typography was critical in the graphic design of Latin, Chinese, Arabic, and Cyrillic alphabets. Obtaining an objective aesthetic level by conveying messages minimally through conceptual and typographic resolutions is contemporarily possible (Uçar, 2004). Typography has generally been included in contemporary arts. The artworks of contemporary artists who used fonts have been assessed by Kozlu and Benugur (2014).

Typography is defined as a condensed visual form of communication that conveys every thought and information to humankind through a visual impact (Carter, Meggs, and Day, 2011). The history of typography has begun with a printing technique consisting of changeable mobile letters founded by Gutenberg and continued with digital typography after modernism's developments. Graphic design education is the design of typographic elements as well as the design of visual elements. The subject of this manuscript consists of the education of graphic design students to strengthening typographic expression and being more creative. Literature surveying (Mesghali, 2011; Sarikavak, 2014; Skolos & Wedell, 2006; Tselentis, 2011; White, 2005; Willen & Strals, 2009) and the typographic expression ways determined and preferred by experts are integration, resolution, transposition, disintegration, and lettering. Integration is the union of font and image on the same layer. Resolution is the separation of the font from the visual elements in the background. Transposition is the conversion of the font to image and vice versa. Disintegration is the disjunction of font and image, and consolidation in a disconnected but mysterious sense. Lettering is the figural and aesthetic transformation of the typographical elements to decorative images. This study investigates the effect of instruction of typographic expression ways to students on the students' design and learning process.

1.1. Literature Review

The limited studies of typography in graphic design are as follows: In their studies, Lau & Chu (2015) investigated the method of using kinetic typography and interactive approach to conduct a design experiment for children to learn vocabularies. This study shows that through the implementation of motion graphics, kinetic typography, and information design, a more diversified learning experience can stimulate and strengthen children's perception sensitivity and learnability. It can also improve children's understanding of the meaning of vocabularies through kinetic expressions. Highsmith (2015) summarizes their view of typography training as a type designer in their article named *The Typographic Collaboration: Is Type Design the Future of Typographic Education?* Typography is a collaboration between the typographer and his or her chosen typeface. Though collaboration isn't new, the roles are changing. While learning typography takes less time each day, typefaces are getting more sophisticated and complex. The way a typographer works with

a typeface is evolving so type education should evolve as well. Loveless, Bhattacharya & Griffith (2012) have discussed the following: Typography is an affective re/presentational strategy when used as a medium within the research framework of arts-based inquiry. Grounded in a more extensive and comparative case study investigating the experiences of two elementary teachers, their study has situated typography within the field of arts-based inquiry, explored typography as a research process and product, examined the interpretive aspects of typography as representations of research data, and presented a rationale for the use of typography in educational studies. Researchers emphasize the importance of experiences and art interactions. According to them; Taking cues from street art and modernism's assault on status-quo assumptions, typography transforms normative research experiences to allow for a broader questioning of the way things are. The effects of creative typography practices in graphic design education on students' metacognitive skills and products through experimental design were investigated by Tarlakazan (2011) using a control group. It was found that the metacognitive skills of students who practiced creative typography were higher than the control group. However, no significant difference was detected between product grades before and after the experiment for each group. Uslu (2009) evaluated the typography lectures given in higher education institutions. Uslu observed both the students and the instructors mostly agree that students don't receive sufficient education on typography enough to satisfy market expectations. Additionally, students were noticed to be keener on digital typography courses. Dündar (2005) researched typographic language in graphic design in the West and Turkey. Dündar found that in the West, typographic language tended to "imagination" concordantly to new technologies and the thus changing structure of reading, when in Turkey, despite not dating back far, typographic language in graphic design was seen to progress especially simultaneous to increasing opportunities of communication. Relevant investigations showed limited studies were conducted on typographic expressions in graphic design. This manuscript is expected to contribute to the literature.

2. Research Method

In this study, qualitative and quantitative research methods were used altogether. Quantitative data was obtained through the evaluation of single-grouped experimental design method products whereas qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with experimental design method participants.

2.1. Study Group

The study group comprised of senior year Azad University Graphic and Architecture Faculty Visual Communication and Art students (10) who took the "Project Appliance" course. The group consists of volunteering students with elementary typography knowledge and typography skills who have not previously brought out creative, original, and new typography works. Students' ages range between 21 and 25. Four of them were female and six of them were male.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

An experimental method was employed in this study. The research's model is a single group pretest-posttest design. The experimental process of the research is typographic expression method training and applications. Before and after practical training, student products (poster design) were collected. For the evaluation of these products, researchers developed a scoring rubric and an answer key scale based on fundamental elements of typography and graphic design. For every

typographic expression method (integration, resolution, transposition, disintegration, and lettering) each student was asked of two products for pre and post appliance. The scoring rubric and answer key scale were formed as a total of 29 items for the products of five typographic methods. On the scale, each observed feature of a product was determined separately. In this manuscript, only the criterion of the first method (Integration - Time) for the first asked poster is given as an example. (1) Providing the spatial relation between font and image. (2) Providing the form relation between font and image. (3) Providing the motion unity between font and image. (4) Conveying the message efficiently with font and image altogether. (5) Ensuring legibility. (6) Integrating the other elements (color, texture, line, point, etc.) with the design. (7) Creativity and originality of the design. The Rubric scale regarding the products is as follows: excellent: 4, above satisfactory: 3, satisfactory: 2, below satisfactory: 1, not satisfactory: 0

To collect the qualitative data of the study, the semi-structured interview forms were prepared and used to collect student views on the experimental process. The following open-ended questions were asked to the students to determine the contributions of the training of typographic expression methods in graphic design to their work and progress: (1) What are your thoughts on the training of typographic expression methods you have received? (2) You have been taught about typography and image relation under five methods. What are your thoughts on these methods? (3) What are the contributions of your experiences during the course to you?

The draft interview form was consulted with experts for validity-check and regulated as advised.

2.3. Data Collection and Research Application Process

Prior to the research application process, necessary permits were obtained from the director of the concerning graduate school. The research application process lasted 8 weeks. The first author of this manuscript who teaches typography and graphic atelier courses in Iran at Azad University Art and Architecture Faculty has trained the students himself during this process. Before the pre appliance, the students were informed about the study, the procedures, and were given the names of five typography methods and students were asked to design a poster (product) solely using their own experiences for each typography method. The designs were made with Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. For each poster, the chosen subjects are as follows: 1. Time, 2. Music, 3. Theatre, 4. Speed, 5. Peace. The works and the choices of the students were not intervened. The products were saved to computers in JPG format.

During the research application process, a presentation on typographic expression methods in graphic design was made, and additionally, a Q&A session with discussion was held. The sessions were enriched by discussions on national and international example studies. Poster drafts were evaluated in the atelier cooperatively with the students. In the last two weeks, the students were asked to think about the posters they have made before the pre-appliance and re-design the posters with what they have learned during the training. The students were again not intervened. Poster subjects regarding the pre and post appliances and the typographic expressions are depicted in Table 1. At the end of the training, the products of students were printed and preserved to be evaluated.

Table 1 Research Application Process

Typographic Expressions	First poster	Last poster
Integration	1. Time	6. Time
Resolution	2. Music	7. Music
Transposition	3. Theatre	8. Theatre
Disintegration	4. Speed	9. Speed
Lettering	5. Peace	10. Peace

To collect the qualitative data of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students individually. The interviews lasted about 20 to 30 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and detailed notes were taken.

2.4. Data Analysis

The posters designed before and after the pre and post appliances, respectively, were evaluated by three field academic experts with the scoring rubric and answer key and the results were tabulated. The study was conducted with a group of 10 students therefore the results of pre and post appliances were acquired by a non-parametric test, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test.

In the qualitative part of the study, the data collected by semi-structured interviews were analyzed by content analysis. The audio recordings were converted into written documents. Written documents were compared with the researcher's notes, and coding and thematic coding were done by two researchers. For the reliability of the data, the formula $[\text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement})] \times 100$, which was proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), was used and the percentage of agreement was calculated as 0.80. Direct quotations were included to reflect the views of the participants more realistically and to ensure the validity of the research. Participants were given the nicknames S1, S2, etc. Additionally, qualitative analysis results were digitized and presented in tables for ease of reading.

3. Findings

In this manuscript, the reflection of typographic expression training methods on students' design and learning processes was analyzed. In this regard, the total score average of students' products before and after the training is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 Total score average of pre and post appliance products

Typographic Expressions	First poster	Last poster
Integration-Time	1.7	3.59
Resolution-Music	1.98	3.66
Transposition-Theatre	1.83	3.60
Disintegration-Speed	1.83	3.58
Lettering-Peace	1.82	3.61

Table 2 shows that the total average scores of post appliances products were higher than of pre appliance products. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to determine if the difference between total average grades were significant. The results are laid out in Table 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, respectively.

Table 3 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of pre and post appliance scores for Integration-Time posters

Pre & Post Appl.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.809	.000
Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465		
Ties	0	-	-		

Table 4 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of pre and post appliance scores for Resolution-Music posters

Pre & Post Appl.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.823	.000
Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465		
Ties	0	-	-		

Table 5 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of pre and post appliance scores for Transposition-Theatre posters

Pre & Post Appl.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.797	.000
Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465		
Ties	0	-	-		

Table 6 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of pre and post appliance scores for Disintegration-Speed posters

Pre & Post Appl.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.805	.000
Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465		
Ties	0	-	-		

Table 7 Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results of pre and post appliance scores for Lettering-Peace posters

Pre & Post Appl.	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p
Negative Ranks	0	.00	.00	-4.800	.000
Positive Ranks	30	15.50	465		
Ties	0	-	-		

Table 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 show a significant difference between pre and post appliances in categories Integration-Time, Resolution-Music, Transposition-Theatre, Disintegration-Speed, and Lettering-Peace that is in favor of post-appliance products. These findings show that typographic expression method training has a positive effect on student products and is efficient. The qualitative data obtained from post-application student interviews support the quantitative data.

Figure 1, depicts the rates of common thoughts of students and the themes acquired through the content analysis of semi-structured interviews that were conducted after the typographic expression methods training.

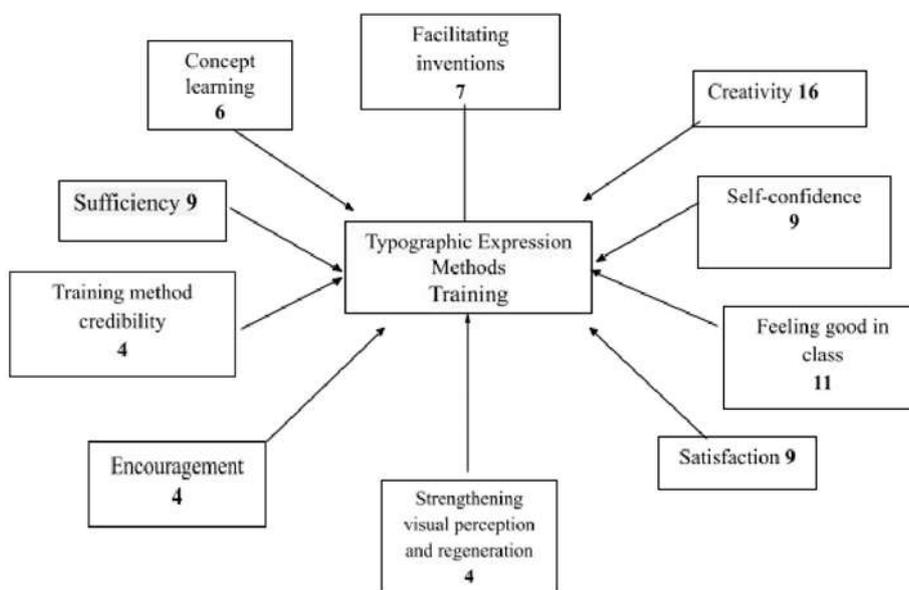


Fig 1 (a) Students' views after typographic expression methods training

Figure 1 shows that students' views of typographic expression methods training include the following themes: creativity (16), feeling good in class (11), self-confidence (9), satisfaction (9), sufficiency (9), facilitating inventions (7), concept learning (6), encouragement (4), training method credibility (4), strengthening visual perception and regeneration (4)

Some quotations of students' thoughts are given below:

"...I can say that your teachings were very meaningful and convincing. Compared to before, I pay better attention to composition and typographic expression in my work. I have discovered my creativity. Now my thoughts can become designs". S 5

"...we have proceeded from theory to practice in class, so I have understood the subject better. I have designed my thoughts... I feel good. I have learned the practicing field of typography. Now I see a creative power in me." S 8

"I have never felt this satisfied and confident. This training and what I have learned has given me strength and increased my creativity. I've learned what font is. With the things I've learned, I can now say that I exist in the world of design." S 4

"We've worked on five methods about typography and image. I can say that all of them were very meaningful to me. I can explain which design belongs in which method easily. Better yet, I've understood the importance and use of typography better. I've gained creativity and self-confidence." S 6

"It's safe to say this training has been very useful. I now have learned the function and concept of typography. My horizons are broadened, I have thought deeper and felt more productive." S 3

The quotations from students show that typographic expression methods training has contributed to students both professionally and personally.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this manuscript, the reflection of typographic expression methods training on students' design and learning processes was analyzed. In this regard, students are found successful based on the evaluation of their products before and after the typographic expression methods training. Students have reflected to have developed both professionally and personally. Themes such as creativity, feeling well, self-confidence, and satisfaction appeared in content analysis consisting of interview notes.

Tarlakazan (2011) found that students in the experimental group who have taken creative typography practice training have higher metacognitive skills compared to those in the control group who have taken traditional typography training. In this research as well, students have designed successful products along with feeling more creative and regenerated due to newly learned concepts. These results coincide with the results of studies that emphasize the importance of experimental projects in typography courses in graphic design education (Ayrancı, 2009; Benugur, 2012; Uslu, 2009; Yücebaş 2006). In their manuscripts, Loveless, Bhattacharya & Griffith (2012) and Lau & Chu (2015), have pointed out the use of typography in educational studies. This study too is a graphic design and typography study which is thought to fill a significant gap in the field. In the light of this discussion, experimental and creative typographic expressions are advised to be included in all graphic design training programs and applications.

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