

Bibliographical

1. McLuhan, M. and Fiore, Q., 2001. *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Originally published 1967. Berkeley: Gingko Press.

In my initial research, error windows were often seen as neutral tools for technological communication. However, In *The Medium is the Massage*, McLuhan (2001) argues that the medium is not just a carrier of information—it also shapes how we perceive the world. This made me realise that the language of error windows reflects a power structure. It creates an unresponsive mode of communication through a fixed tone, a forced and singular form of interaction, and a command-like way for the system to speak to the user. Because of this, I started to see the error message as something that could be rewritten and reinterpreted, and began a series of iterative experiments.

In terms of form, The experimental visual layout of *The Medium is the Massage* also influenced my decision to embed translated verses into UI pop-ups. Through this, I tried to explore how we might rebuild a more intentional and responsive way of communication through the intervention of the medium.

2. Blauvelt, A., 1994. *An opening: Graphic design's discursive spaces*. *Visible Language*, 28(3), pp.205–217.

In *An Opening: Graphic Design's Discursive Spaces*, Andrew blauvelt (1994) shows that the construction of graphic design history has long been limited by a linear narrative structure that ignores the fluidity and diversity of graphic design in social practice. This perspective has been important to the development of my current research, the “Poetic Toolkit for System Language”.

In my research, I noticed that error messages often use standardised and fixed language that does not allow for any user response. They appear neutral, but in fact reflect a system of control over how users are allowed to communicate. Blauvelt's critique helped me to recognise the underlying power structures embedded in such technical language. In response, I began developing poetic vocabularies and translation templates to interrupt this one-way mode of address, allowing users to reshape, respond to, and reclaim the language of the system.

3. Goldsmith, K., 2011. *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*. New York: Columbia University Press.

In Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age, Kenneth Goldsmith (2011) revisits the boundaries of writing, where language is no longer just a tool for expressing meaning or emotion, but a substance that can be manipulated, managed, and reconfigured. And he proposes a view of creativity that uses language as a physical material. This viewpoint directly inspired my idea of constructing the "Poetic Toolkit for System Language". At the beginning of the project, I focused more on the language text itself in the error messages, but Goldsmith's experiment on ".jpg" to ".txt" embedded with Shakespearean text to cause image interference made me start to think about whether the language not only conveys the content and meaning, but also can disturb the interface with its formatting and structure, and even intervene in the operation of the system.

So I began to think about whether we can start from the 'intervening nature' of language, and design a new way of language to "rewrite" the system language in a human way. As Goldsmith said, "writing today is managing information", I try to make the monotonous and indifferent language in these error windows grow poetic and rhythmic again, and leave space for users to express and respond to their emotions.

4.Crary, J. (2013). *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. London: Verso.(pp.10-28)

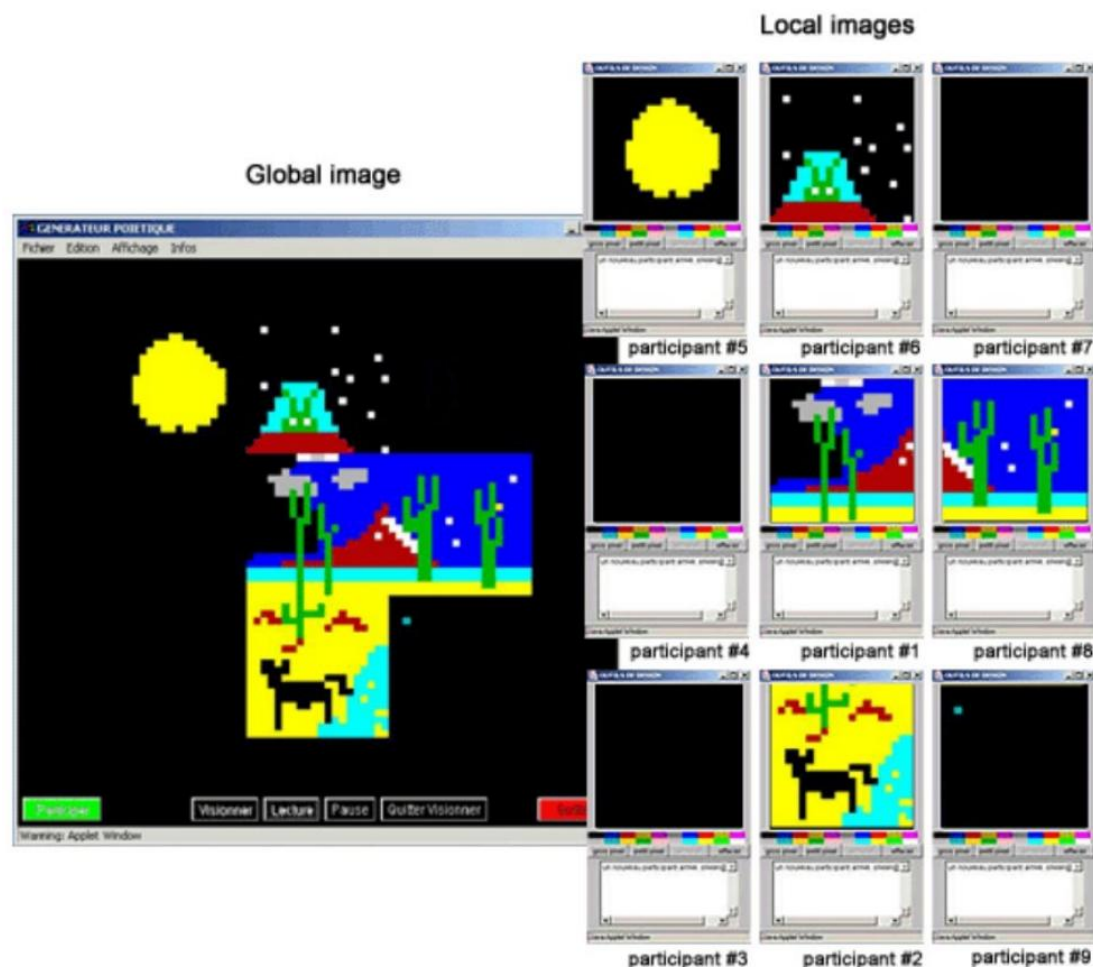
In *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, Crary (2013) explores the ever-expanding, never-ending process of capitalism in the 21st century, forcing us to be constantly active, eroding forms of communal and political expression as well as disrupting the structures of everyday life. In *Position through Iterating*, my project focuses on the structure of the error messages language itself, but Crary's argument made me realise that systematically imposed waits (e.g., delays, loads, crashes) are also a form of control. The apparent neutrality of error windows, which in fact deprive users of their ability to act, led me to shift my research away from the language itself and towards the power structures behind it.

I began to rethink the language of error messages. What if these system messages aren't neutral at all? Who wrote them? Why can they speak on behalf of the system?

5.Bridle, J. (2018). *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*. London: Verso.

In *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*, James Bridle (2018) shows that more data and more computing power often create more chaos. Systems that claim to be rational and transparent are in fact complex, closed, and even somehow violent. This got me thinking about whether error message languages create an “illusion of transparency and clarity”, whereby the error message system creates a sense of system and order, but at the same time excludes the user. These simple pop-ups don't do a very good job of letting the user know what is really going on; they just tell the user to “OK”, “Ignore” or “Retry”. I began to wonder if we, as users, could change this language by responding, questioning, or interrupting.

6. Auber, O. (1987–present). Poietic Generator. [online] Available at:
[https://poietic-generator.net.\(project\)](https://poietic-generator.net.(project))

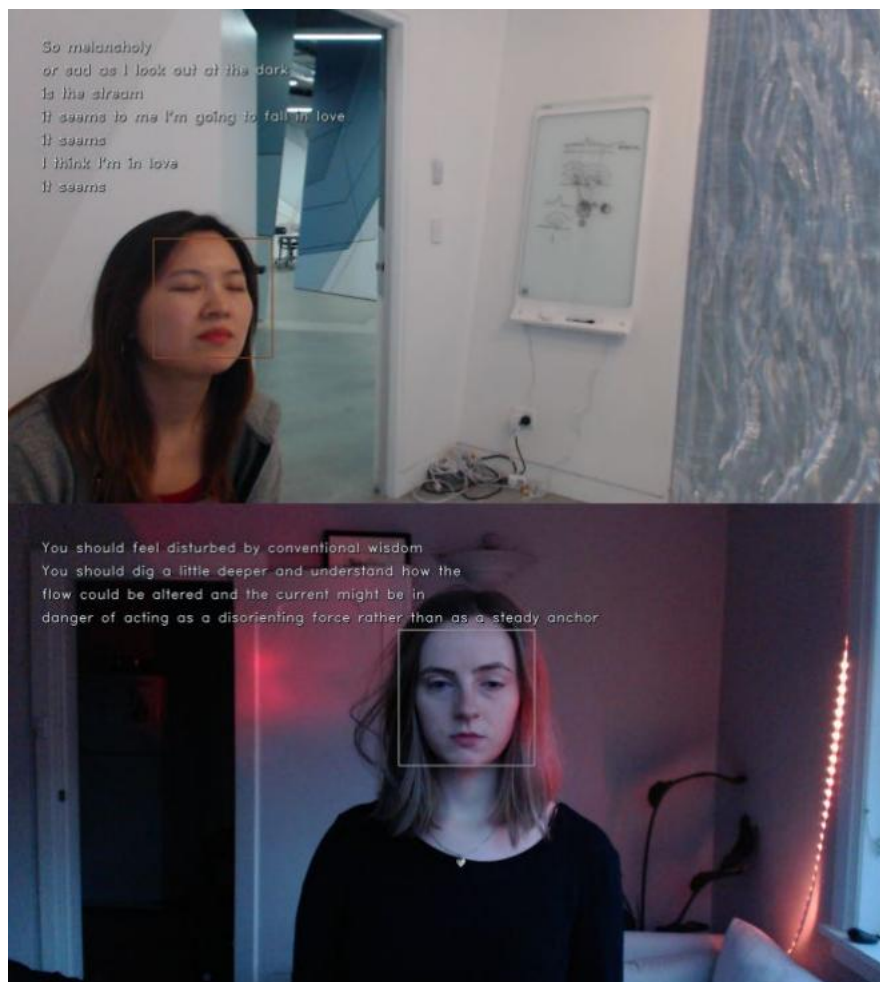


This is an online collaborative mapping experiment in which each user controls only one point in a grid, but all work together to create evolving visual structures. It demonstrates a decentralised model of meaning generation — language or form need not follow top-down instructions.

This got me thinking: can language be co-generated from fragments and edges, like images? This project inspired my idea of the “Poetic Toolkit for System Language” — a user-driven, collage-constructed alternative language system to counteract systemic control and reclaim space for expression.

At the same time, it prompted me to re-examine my project: was the “toolkit” I had constructed, instead, too systematic, thus limiting the real linguistic agency of the users? This further led me to think about the presentation of the project — is it possible to construct a collaborative and open platform? For example, by encouraging different users to upload linguistic fragments and poetic responses to form a “collective poetic library of error messages”, the responses would no longer be isolated individual behaviours, but rather a process of co-creation.

7.Mirror Ritual: Human-Machine Co-Construction of Emotion(project)

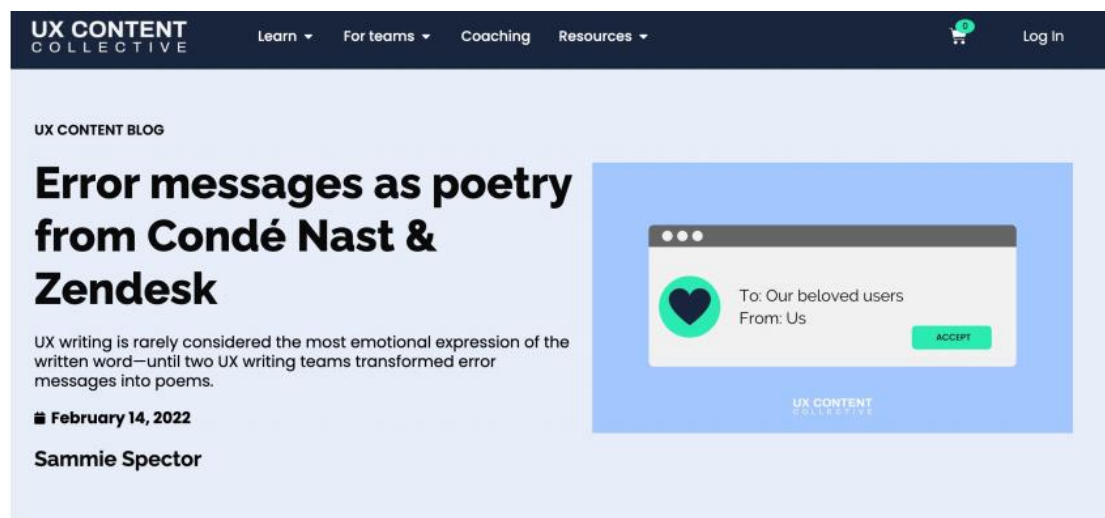


Mirror Ritual is an interactive artwork in which the system recognises the audience's facial expressions and uses AI to generate short poems in response, creating an “emotion-language-influence” interactive scene. The flow of this project made me

think: if the system can respond to human emotions, can we reverse it and let humans respond to the system's language?

In my project, I reversed the mechanism of Mirror Ritual. Instead of the system writing poems for people, I let users “speak back” when an error message appears. This shift led me to think more about who has the right to speak in human-computer interactions. I wanted to create a method to rewrite system language—to let users step in, respond, and turn cold, fixed error messages into something more human and poetic. It became a way to reclaim the space for expression at the moment when system language fails.

8. Condé Nast & Zendesk. (2021). Error Messages as Poetry. [online] UX Content Collective. Available at: <https://uxcontent.com/error-messages-as-poetry>.
(project)



This project is a content experiment initiated by Condé Nast in collaboration with Zendesk, attempting to rewrite common system error messages into poetic expressions. By reconstructing the language of error messages that users encounter in daily life, they added rhythm, emotion, and humour, making system language more than just cold technical instructions.

This project gave me more clarity about the direction of my own work and offered creative ideas for building my own word lists, poetic rules, and structure templates. For example, their use of short breaks, metaphors, and rhythmic phrasing influenced the way I shaped poetic expressions, and directly inspired how I later designed templates and rule cards.

My aim is not just to make error messages poetic, but to create a complete language transformation system—one that allows users to intervene in, rewrite, and respond to system language in a more human and meaningful way.

9. Suchman, L. (1987). *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human-Machine Communication*. Cambridge University Press.

In *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human-Machine Communication*, Lucy Suchman (1987) argues the limitations of the traditional “plan-execute” paradigm in human-computer interaction design. She points out that human-system communication is not based on a strictly pre-determined plan, but rather is generated and adapted in specific contexts. This theoretical perspective prompted me to re-examine the language structure of system pop-ups — the language used in error windows may seem clear and rational, but in reality, it is unable to accommodate the user's contextual differences and subjective responses.

This book has been an important source of inspiration for my project development. I began to think: if the system language cannot flexibly respond to specific contexts, is it possible to inject more emotion and responsiveness into it through the mechanism of human “poetic translation”? My project tries to embed humanised poetic language into the established systemic context, break the “unidirectionality” of the system’s expression in a structured way, and build a more responsive communication interface.

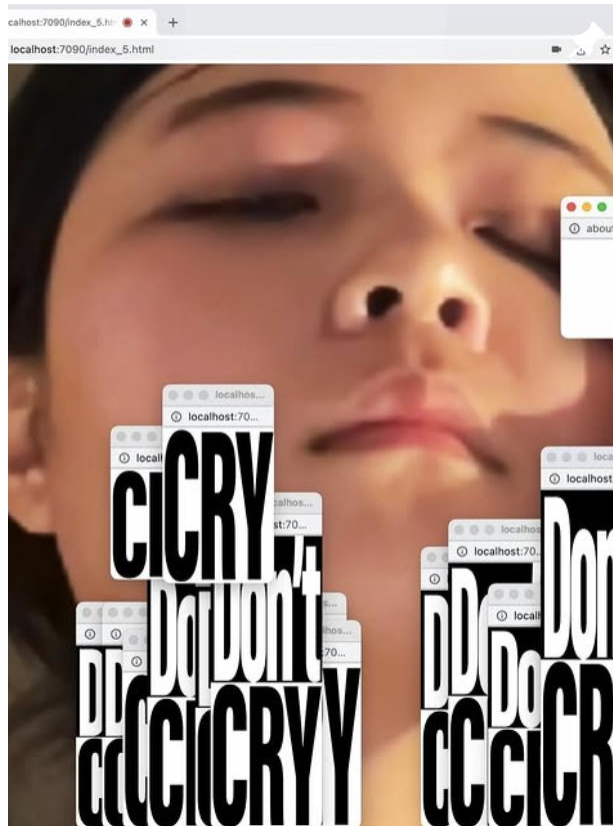
10. Holzer, J. (1977–1987). Truisms. Various urban installations.(project)



This is a series of installation projects in which Holzer places words of truth in a minimalist linguistic form in everyday public spaces such as electronic screens, LED scrolling subtitles, billboards, and building facades in the city. She directly uses the language itself as a visual subject to provoke the viewer's thoughts. This calm, short, contextually unified, and unresponsive form of language constructs a seemingly neutral, but in fact highly empowering context. This made me think of systemic language, and I began to wonder if the language of these error windows is more than just content; is its form itself an expression of power?

In addition, the form of Holzer's compositions gave me another inspiration: language does not necessarily have to be submissive to its own context, but can be abstracted, rewritten, and entered into a new structure of expression. Even the most common and simple forms of language can be fractured, intervened, restructured, and rewritten to become carriers of emotions and consciousness. Her work provides me with another possibility for the form of language intervention.

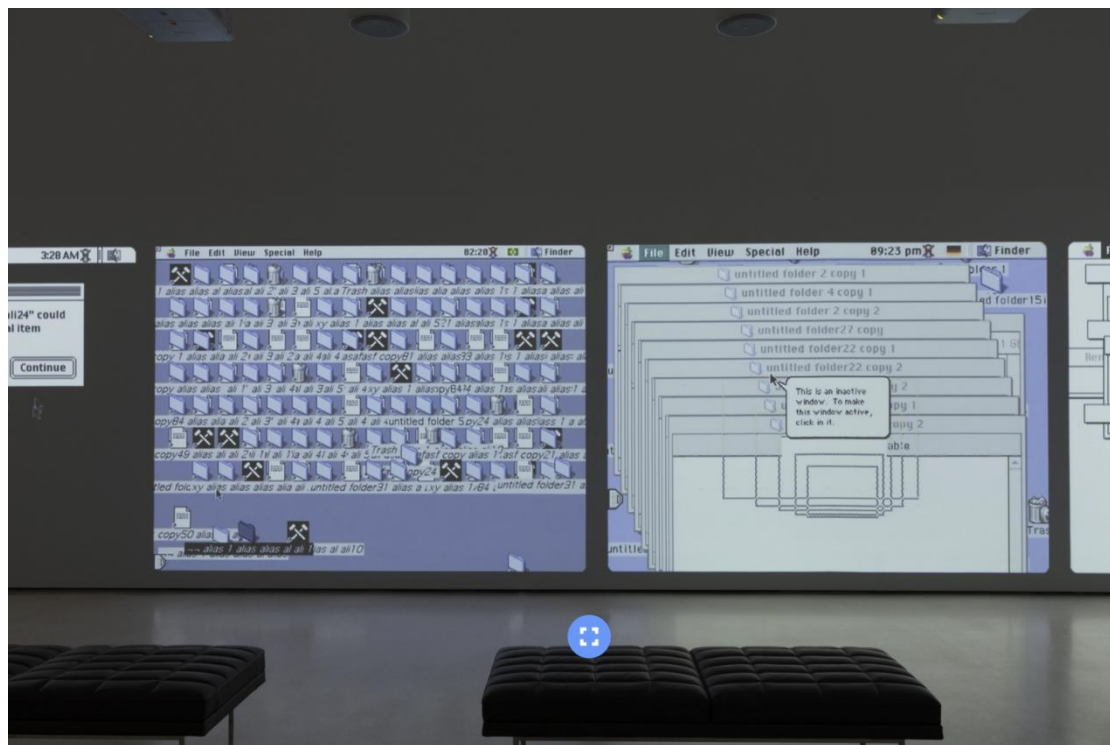
11. Song, Y. (2021). Cry, Don't Cry. [online] Yehwan Song. Available at: [https://yhsong.com/.\(project\)](https://yhsong.com/.(project))



In Cry, Don't Cry, Song uses facial recognition technology to pop up a “Cry” or “Don't Cry” box when the user makes a “crying” face. “Don't Cry” appears on the interface when the user shows a crying expression. This type of interaction not only breaks the passivity of traditional interfaces but also prompts the user to think about the relationship between system language and emotional expression.

This work had a significant impact on my “Poetic Toolkit for System Language” project. It made me realise that system language is not only a tool for information transfer but also an expression of emotion and power relations. Therefore, in this project, I try to give users the ability to redefine and respond to system language through poetic language translation, in order to build a more human and interactive interface experience.

12.JODI (Heemskerk, J., & Paesmans, D.). (2002). My%Desktop.(project)



My%Desktop is a classic work of art that creates a chaotic, out-of-control desktop environment, where the screen is constantly overlaid, crashed, and reset by system windows. It is not a simulation of the normal functioning of technological logic, but rather a deconstruction of the operating system's graphical interface that confronts the user with a real, yet completely unfamiliar, system interface.

The visual form of this project had a direct impact on the way I created later on. It made me realise that the power control of the system's language exists not only in the text, but also in the rhythm, layout, and structure of the pop-ups themselves.

Therefore, in the iterative experiments, instead of treating the poetic language as a standalone module, I chose to re-embed it into the context of the error pop-ups and began to construct an interactive experience with a narrative. This mechanism can be seen as a response to, and a continuation of, the “visual language of systemic disorder” in My%Desktop, and JODI's work has made me realise the importance of context—and the fact that the interface itself not only conveys information, but also tells a story.

Extended critical analyses

1. Mirror Ritual: Human-Machine Co-Construction of Emotion



Mirror Ritual is an interactive installation in which technology captures the viewer's expressions and projects system-generated poetic text onto the screen. These texts are not objective descriptions of the expressions, but rather an ambiguous and emotional response. The core idea of the project is that emotions are not objects detected by the machine, but are co-generated as a result of the interaction between the person and the system. It tries to break the traditional mode of communication in human-computer interfaces and proposes a more perceptive and humane form of communication. This ideological position is not only presented in its concept, but also reinforced through its carefully constructed form.

The most crucial formal designs of the installation are the “mirror screen” and “system silence”. The screen is like a mirror, where the viewer sees a close-up of their own face, while the text appears on it. This structure of “seeing oneself + being responded to” establishes an emotional dialogue with a non-vocal language. The system does not produce any sound, nor does it have the commanding language of

traditional system interfaces, but rather responds to the user's emotions through short poems. This turns the whole installation into a space for emotional feedback rather than a task-driven interface. By removing command language and introducing ambiguity, poeticity, and emotion, the project challenges the cold, unidirectional structure of system language.

This formal approach is not merely aesthetic—it fundamentally redefines how we understand communication between humans and systems. This work has shifted my view of graphic communication. Whereas I used to think that the main task of design was to “communicate clearly”, Mirror Ritual emphasises “shared perception”. Instead of conveying a definite message, it creates an ambiguous but emotional context. This made me realise that graphic communication can be a process of feeling “understood” or “touched”. Text in this project is no longer a rational instruction, but a component of visual emotion. This approach made me rethink the role of graphic design in system interfaces - it can be not only a carrier of information, but also a medium of perception.

My project explores how the language of indifference and error can be transformed into humanised verse, creating a human way for users to respond. Mirror Ritual directly inspired me to “respond” to the language of the system in a structured way. I began to experiment with creating a set of user-selectable “vocabularies” and “sentence templates” that users could click on and combine to construct their own poetic responses in the same way that they would participate in an interactive installation. By embedding response-building into a fixed yet flexible structure, I aim to simulate the constraints of system language while offering moments of subjective intervention. The major difference from Mirror Ritual is that I don't use emotion recognition techniques, but rather create response scenarios by setting up a story (simulating a ‘system crash’ and ‘repair’ process). In each level, the user is invited to participate in the task of fixing the language of the system. Mirror Ritual convinced

me that even in the most closed system language, a poetic path of response can be opened to human emotions.

2. Blauvelt, A., 1994. *An opening: Graphic design's discursive spaces*. *Visible Language*, 28(3), pp.205–217.

In *An Opening: Graphic Design's Discursive Spaces*, Andrew Blauvelt (1994) suggests that graphic design is not only a tool for communicating information, but also a practice that can construct discursive spaces. He emphasises that design itself participates in the creation of sociolinguistic structures and occupies a position of power within them. The visual systems, buttons, and interface languages that we see every day are not actually neutral; they dictate who can speak and how. Blauvelt encourages designers to not only perform the task of visual communication, but also to be aware of their role in language and power. This perspective made me realise that design is not in the service of “content”, but is just as much about constructing meaning as the content itself.

Although this is a theoretical article, its structure and language reflect what he calls “opening a space”. Instead of piling up concepts in complex academic language, the article builds its questions step by step, guiding the reader from a conventional understanding of visual form to a reflection on the structure of discourse. For example, his use of “An Opening” in the title carries a sense of process. This choice of language also conveys his basic stance: that design is not a closed system, but a field that can be entered, questioned, and changed. This made me not passively accept his viewpoints outright, but feel encouraged to build my own judgement.

This article gave me a new understanding of graphic communication design. Whereas I used to be more concerned with the visual power of images and words, I am now beginning to pay attention to how they form a language system. I realised that many

design details are not “neutral” in the language of the system, but instead carry a hidden structure of authority. This article made me focus on the power of language in interfaces: the system speaks, but the user does not. This “unfair dialogue” is what I want to reveal and respond to in my project.

My project aims to restructure the imperative language in the system's error messages so that the user can “speak back” in a human way. After reading this article, I realised that this is not just a question of style or aesthetics, but one of language structure. Inspired by Blaauvelt, I started to use templates to reconstruct the syntax of system language, allowing users to participate in its reconstruction. I wanted to leave space in the structure for the user to speak. Design became a discursive experiment—not for solving problems, but for asking questions and creating cracks. This approach also gave me more confidence to understand and advance design as a linguistic practice. This reference made me further realise that design is not just about visuals and form, but also about expressive power and structures of speech. It also became central to my thinking about the project: when the language of the system doesn't give users the opportunity to respond, can design create a way to reclaim the right to speak?