

Thesis Paper Proposal

The Role of Metaphor in Interaction Design

Introduction

Metaphors can be used for good and ill in interaction design. They can be used to convey methods of input and provide beginning users with a means of understanding what the product is. But the problem with metaphors is that they grow stale, especially in digital environments. The connection between a physical object and what it is representing is often dubious at best, and over time, often becomes untenable; it becomes a dead or frozen metaphor. Often what is required is a rethinking and revamping of the metaphor to better reflect new thinking and, equally important, new feelings about all sides of the metaphor: the thing, the interpretant, and the representamen.

What are the best ways to use metaphor in interaction design? How can you prevent those metaphors from being misused, trapping users in unusable and inflexible forms?

Aims of the Paper

This paper will attempt to present the correct ways to use metaphor in interaction design.

Structure

I will probably structure the paper as follows:

- Introduction
- A brief look at metaphors and their use
- A brief look at semiotics in design
- Why use metaphors in interaction design
- Avoiding frozen metaphors
- Analyzing some current metaphors in interaction design
- Conclusions: Predicting the eventual demise of the desktop metaphor

Partial References

Alexander, Christopher. *The Phenomenon of Life: The Nature of Order, Book I*

Carroll, J. M., Mack, R. L. and Kellogg, W. A. "Interface Metaphors and User Interface Design"

Cooper, A. "The Myth of Metaphor"

Dourish, Paul. *Where the Action Is: The Foundations of Embodied Interaction*

Fogg, B.J. *Persuasive Technology: Using Computers to Change What We Think and Do*

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live By*