Hanacara Project: Javanese Alphabet as a Visual Element on Interior Design

Taufik Murtono
Faculty of Art and Design, Indonesia Institute of the Arts Surakarta
Ki Hajar Dewantara Road, No.19 Kentingan, Jebres, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

Abstract
Ethnic alphabet been replaced by Latin alphabet was a common phenomenon that occured in parts of the world that had literary tradition. Similarly, Javanese alphabet, its role now only as a decorative element to accompany the Latin alphabet on street names, government offices, and schools. The existence of Javanese alphabet was no longer noticed by most of people. This study aimed to experiment Javanese alphabet as visual element in interior. The alphabet in this study was treated not as a mere message medium, but a unity in product design. Experimentation design had several goals. First, as an effort in bringing Javanese alphabet to society in a simple way. Secondly, if people could read simple written sentences they would understand the wisdom that was contained in them. Third, as a design innovation effort. The use of Javanese alphabet on interior elements produced strong characteristic products. The placement of Javanese alphabet in the neighborhood could attract more users. Thus, the Javanese alphabet would re-enter the personal space of the community. This research was a collaborative work between graphic design with interior design. The research used the method of design creation which included the stage of problem identification, research, ideas formulation, prototype, selection, implementation, and review. The research's result was product of interior elements with Javanese alphabet visual elements that attracted attention and esthetic value.
Keywords: Javanese alphabet, interior element, graphic design

1. Introduction

Almost the same as language, alphabet had important position and function in the existence of a community. Alphabet was placed as one of cultural supporter elements, because it could give significance to the people who use it. Alphabet's role was showing the identity of a community, becoming expression symbols of mind, feeling, spirituality, behavior, ethnic origin, civilization, and art that was developed within the community.

One of prominent Nusantara alphabets was Javanese alphabet, the alphabet that was used by ancient Central Java people. It was named as Hanacaraka alphabet since its elements were Ha Na Ca Ra Ka alphabet. Right now, Javanese alphabet was still being learned at schools in Java, and was still being used in writing government offices' signages as additional information. Even though it was still being taught at schools, Javanese alphabet had been long time not become part of Javanese community's writing culture (Murtono, 2012: 97).

The limitation in using Javanese alphabet was also affected by the exclusivity of Javanese alphabet using in the history. It was only used in poets society. This condition was different from Latin alphabet that was spread wide through commerce and imperialism since Roman Empire era until European new world expeditions (Rustan, 2011: 3).

All this time, reesearch on Javanese alphabet was focused only on the sophisticated method of learning media's development. As'ad Arismadhani et al's research was the example (2013). It developed media for learning writing ini Javenese alphabet at Android device. Creating and developing the application was using programming language technology. This research would inform that Android device can be used as media for learning the Javanese alphabet writing. The patterns that were used in trial process could be recognized by the application, and the patterns could be matched with Javanese alphabet list on the library file.

Research on class behavior with computerized method was also held through Learning Vector Quantization/LVQ Method. It was turned out that it did not gave significant effect on the enhancement of Javanese alphabet writing and reading learning process (Agustina et al, 2011). Using this tool, Javanese alphabet introduction process was started from changing image into binary code, then the data could be used as starter in training process using LVQ method. In the end, LVQ method was used as the system for recognizing Javanese alphabet. Several trials showed that LVQ method could not recognize Javanese alphabet patterns well. The process did not run smoothly because of cases like the amount of targets that ultimately affect the weight calculation. Javanese alphabet's shapes were unique. There were some letters that similar each to another, and this condition affected the recognition process.

Recognizing Javanese alphabet using method that more fun in fact, had better effect, such as showed at Amri Koswati's research (2013). The research intended to describe the application and enhancement of active, creative, effective, and fun learning method in paragraph writing using Javanese alphabet. It was concluded that the method was able in enhancing paragraph writing in Javanese alphabet skill.

All research on Javanese alphabet learning field were aimed to facilitate people in reading and writing using

this ethnic alphabet. Yet in fact, until now, ethnic alphabet had not become writing culture that was broadly used by the community. The objective of this research was to respond Javanese alphabet's functional shift on the community from being used as writing language medium into decorative function by creating interior elements based on Javanese alphabet. In this research, alphabet was not treated as a mere medium for message delivery. It was treated as an entity of product design. Design experimentation had several purposes. First, as a simple effort in juxtaposing Javanese alphabet to the community. Second, when the community could read simple sentence that was written, then they would understand the wisdom that was implied in it. Third, as an effort in design innovation. Javanese alphabet placement in interior element resulted products with strong character. Javanese alphabet placement in residential environment could become center of attraction for the people in the certain area. Therefore, Javanese alphabet would re-enter community's sphere.

2. Method

The method used was design creation method. Design was considered as sustainable system. Way of thinking. Design as a way of thinking that involving several stages. Design as a way of thinking that produced solution. Design process involved these steps (1) problem identification (2) research (3) idea formulation (4) prototype (5) sellection (6) implementation (7) review (Ambrose & Harris, 2010: 11).

1) Problem identification. First step in design process was identifying problem and target audience. In the case of Javanese alphabet that had been left by the users, efforts in drawing Javanese alphabet closer to users habitat were needed. Alphabet's existence should stand out, considering all these time public were neglected alphabet that was displayed. 2) Research. This stage included analysis the resulted findings. Findings could have the shapes of design issues' historical facts, research results on consumers and opinions generated from limited discussions, and identification of constraints that were occured. Based on searches against efforts in drawing Javanese alphabets closer to the public, it could be concluded that public needed alphabet's presence in different situations. Attentions in Javanese alphabet could not be obtained casually. It was required a more comfortable athmosphere to create interaction between alphabet and the public. 3) Idea formulation. This condition told that Javanese alphabet's existence was neglected. The idea that was offered was preparing Javanese alphabet so it could enter people's personal spaces. One of medias that could accomodate it was furniture. The presence of Javanese alphabet in furniture itself would draw the alphabet closer to furnitur owners and the people that visited them. Moreover when the furnitures with Javanese alphabet shape, placed in public and commercial spaces, hence it would enable interraction with broader audience. 4) Prototype. Prototype had been already designed at this first year research – as implementation of Javanese alphabet in furniture – such lamp, and room partition. Prototype was needed to understand if design solutions would work for the problem or not in front of limited audience, before it was shown to the users. 5) Selection. Prototype sellection process was done and it was resulted that most of the prospective users wanted Javanese alphabet that was treated as room partition. The main reason was that room partition enabled public in watching and enjoying the alphabet unimpededly. Selection was a process to recognize whether a solution was right or wrong in answering the brief. Several possibilities could happened, such as solution that seemed practical but in the end proved that it was not fitted with the purpose. This research process was limited only to the selection stage. Hereafter, it would be followed by implementation and revieew stages. 6) Implementation. This was a stage to decide which design would be finalized for the client and 7) Review. This stage was a way for designer in enhancing their professional performance by collecting client's and target audience's input. Review would generate information whether the design solution had answered the brief's objective.

Design process seemed linearly applied, but it was still opened for reviewing previous stages if it was needed. The process could be done continually.

3. Javanese alphabet for interior design

Usually, public recognized alphabet as sign system that was used for communicating, as representation of speech. Alphabet that commonly used was Latin alphabet. Alphabet became graphic design and advertising message medium such like poster, brochure, billboard, printed and electronic ads. Beside using image, graphic, and illustration, alphabet was used as message delivering tool too.

Until now, there was no discussion about the result of collaboration between alphabet and furniture design research. This research was a alphabet revitalization beyond its function as a merely message medium, but it was also assimilating to a product structure. Meanwhile, 'structure' in Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia was 1) a way that was organized or built; construction; composition; 2) things that was arranged in certain pattern; 3) element arrangement or part of an object. Alphabet revitalization as a structure was constructed it into the shape of designed product.

Interior design innovation was really needed. It was revealed in seminar "Innovative Design Development in order to enhance national furniture's competitiveness in global market" that was held by Asosiasi Industri Permebelan dan Kerajinan Indonesia (ASMINDO) in 2014. Right now, Javanese alphabet was commonly used

as complementary in district name and street writings. This research was not only put alphabet as ornament, but also made it as inseparable part of product structure. The usage of Javanese alphabet in furniture design structure was based on the need of product uniqueness. This would answer the innovation challenge that was floored on the seminar.

The research was done interdisciplinary, involving graphic design and interior design researchers. Both discipline were needed, considering that research's domain was including letter and furniture design. Interdisciplinary colaboration like this could be a design innovation model that supporting and regional national concerns on creative industry competitive enhancement. Small and middle scale furniture industry in Surakarta needed creative breakthrough to excite furniture market. Creative design as the result of this research was needed for most of furniture practitioners were operators, not designers. The research would become a production spirit charger through design novelty and would enhance practitioners' ability through knowledge transfer by researcher. In the end, this research would generate product that able in enhancing Surakarta furniture UKM's competitiveness.

This design was based on the shift of alphabet function from a writing language medium into visual satisfaction medium. Design creation by borrowing alphabet as beautiful visual object with decoration function. The research result was design that generated alphabet as visual satisfactory. It was beyond its function as verbal language medium. The furniture would become form of creativity that was a collaboration between f graphic design and interior design.

Problem and target audience identification had been done. Furniture crafters in Surakarta needed design breakthrough. Several business owners revealed that lack of furniture design innovation in Surakarta was aggravated by lack of courage in this business. It resulted in weaker bargaining position of Indonesian products in ASEAN free trade market. Consumers' point of view that the research shown, proved that the need of design was increasingly urgent. Throughout the years, consumers only saw designs that did not move and change. The research formulated idea as an effort in understanding and formalizing consumers' need and motivation.This stage was based on its early purpose which was utilize Javanese alphabet as visual element in furniture design. The usage of Javanese alphabet gave two advantages. First, Javanese alphabet's appearance in a calygraphic composition was able to give novelty touuch and nuance. The second, alphabet that was placed in design was becoming natural learning media. Consumers that was enjoying the product, would be interested in searching for the meaning of the alphabet.

Javanese alphabet cal[igraphy chosen for this research's first stage was Kufi style calligraphy. It was a calligraphy style from earlier era. Kufi calligraphy character was dashing, using bold and short strikes for each letter with several parts in square shape. Because of the strong and bold character, Kufi calligraphy usually used on stone carving and coins. More than 300 years Kufi calligraphy had important position and was utilized as part of Quran replication. It was still being used until now. This paper proved that Kufi caligraphy's writing style was efficient and easy to be applied. Kufi calligraphy was easy to be applied, using grid board. It could be used as great learning tool for calligraphy writing. This convenience was also supported by regular Kufi calligraphy geometric style, it was can be easily applied overlapped and twisted (Khatibi & Sijelmassi, 2001: 239).

Next step was prototype making that was needed to understand wether some design solutions could be done or not, through limited presentation before it was presented to the client. Sellection was done as a process to recognize wether a solution was right or wrong in answering the brief. Several possibilities could happened, such as solution that seemed practical. But in fact it was not suited with brief objective. Appliance as the stage in deciding which design would be chosen as final artwork for the client. Reviewing stage would be done later as a way for designers in enhancing their performance. It was done by asking feedback from client and target audience. The review would generate knowledge of whether the design solution had answered the objectives in the brief with the help of the client and the target audience.

The design process seemed to be linear, but it did not rule out a step of reviewing some of the previous stages when necessary. This process could be done continuously. Discussion with craftsmen's result had tendency to give more attention to the application of calligraphy on the room partition design. The main reason for the room partition had better discretion in calligraphy applications than other types of furniture such as chairs and tables.

4. Conclusion

The introduction of Javanese alphabet with a more fun method had a better impact. All research on Javanese alphabet in the field of learning aims to facilitate people in reading and writing with this ethnic alphabet, but in fact ethnic alphabet did not become a widespread writing culture in society until now. This study aimed to respond to the shift of Javanese alphabet function in society from medium of written language to decorative function with creation of Javanese alphabet based furniture.

This design project based on the shift of the alphabet function from medium of written language into a medium of visual satisfaction. The results of this study were designs that made the alphabet as a visual

gratification, beyond its function as a medium of verbal language. The resulting furniture was a form of creativity from the collaborative work of graphic design and interior design.
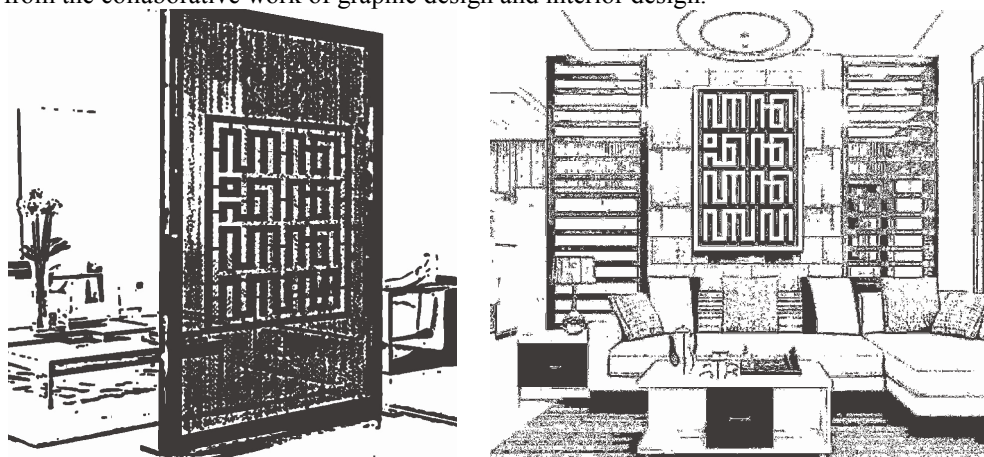
Figures. Product designs of Hanacara Project.

The modern design world was growing and becoming a dominant stream. Modernity carried an industrialization program that impacted the waiver of various potential local patterns. As the result, modern design expansions often negated traditional building structures. Modernity was not limited to design realm. The ideals of modernity wanted the alteration in the field of design, occurring also in the fields of art, science, and industry. Postmodern design emerged as a reaction to modern design. Postmodern celebrated a concept of diversity against the single meaning of modernism. Postmodern design rejected the modern demands in which a design must reflect unity. On the contrary, postmodern work tried to point and show contrasting and varied styles, shapes, and patterns, by picking them from various sources.

Javanese alphabet usage as interior element, at least had double function. The appearance of Javanese alphabet in calligraphic composition could give nuance of novelty. Meanwhie, alphabet that was placed at the design became natural learning media. Consumer would enjoy the product while triggered to understand the message written in the alphabet.

References

Agustina, A.C. et al. (2011). "Pengenalan Aksara Jawa Menggunakan Learning Vector Quantization (LVQ)". *Jurnal Informatika*, Vol. 7 No. 1. [Online] Available: https://labti.ukdw.ac.id/ojs/index.php/informatika/article/viewFile/100/63

Ambrose, G. & Harris, P. (2010), *Design Thinking*, AVA Publishing, Lausanne. 11.

Arismadhani A. et. al. (3013). "Aplikasi Belajar Menulis Aksara Jawa Menggunakan Android". *Jurnal Teknik Pomits* Vol. 2, No. 1. [Online] Available: http://ejurnal.its.ac.id/index.php/teknik/article/view/2732

Koswati, A. (2013). "Peningkatan Keterampilan Menulis Paragraf Beraksara Jawa dengan Metode PAKEM Siswa VIII B SMPN 1 Ayah". *Jurnal Aditya - Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Jawa* Vol. 3 No. 4. [Online] Available: http://portalgaruda.ilkom.unsri.ac.id/index.php?ref=browse&mod=viewarticle&article=97794

Khatibi, A. Sijelmassi, M. (2001), *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, Thames and Hudson: London. 239.

Murtono, T. (2012). "Adaptasi Karakter Aksara Nusantara dalam Perancangan Font Baru sebagai Penguat Citra Produk Indonesia". *Perguruan Tinggi Seni dalam Era Ekonomi Kreatif*. Surakarta: Program Pascasarjana ISI Surakarta. 97.

Rustan, S. (2011). *Font dan Tipografi*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama. 3.