The paper focuses on teaching typographic design, recognising the fact that there is no definite way for a designer to approach a task. The paper arise from several years of teaching typography and takes its point of departure in semiotics, and through analysis identified some potential methods (or models?) to be used for educational practice.

As a graphic designer I am educated in basic typographic principles. But how do these principles apply in a world that is drowning in information and a abundance of distractions when you are a student today? How crucial are these principles when we talk about creativity and individual development, when striving to explore directions for how we can visually communicate.

Principles can be good in working with typography, as in life, but they are not necessarily a goal in itself. Rather, they can be a starting point that may be help to define a typographic direction of a roadmap to a destination point and end result, we do not yet know.

The paper is using selected empirical data and defined typographical contexts, the objective is to investigate how an analysis based on semiotic theory can possibly facilitate a deduction of method(s) to be used for teaching typographic design.

The paper explains how the analyzes that derive from semiotics potentially can evolve into valuable methods that in different ways can be used in teaching situations, partly as a communication tool. Which can help to create a comprehensive overview of the typographic design processes, partly as applied practice tool for students to use to explore and create individual paths within the typographical design universe.

Conducting semiotic analyses based on theories by Charles Sander Peirce, Klaus Krippendorff and Patrick W. Jordan, the paper recognises that not all of these are in fact semiotic theorists but decides to validate them as such due to their shared focus on connotation. In relation to Peirce, the emphasis is on his triadic main theory concerning 'the sign', primarily focusing on the book "Signs in Use" by Johansen and Larsen and "Handbuch der Semiotik" by Nöth.

In case of Krippendorff, two texts constitute the basis for our exploration, namely "Design is Making Sense (of Things)" and "The Semantic Turn

– a New Foundation for Design".

Finally, Jordan's theory is introduced through an exploration of his book "Designing Pleasurable Products". The reason for selecting these theorists is that they are all, in theoretical contexts, generalists and commonly used in relation to design theory. In addition, the paper includes Swiss Designer Willy Kunz on basis of his publications concerning macro and micro aesthetics in typography. The paper focus on general semiotics represented by Peirce, Krippendorff and Jordan, and applied semiotics represented by Kunz, who is a practicing designer. The analyses serve to deduce and subsequently discuss those methods that could potentially form a new launch pad for teaching typographic design.

The paper does not set out to develop final methods or discover final answers as this can be quite comprehensive; rather it aims to identify options and new approaches.

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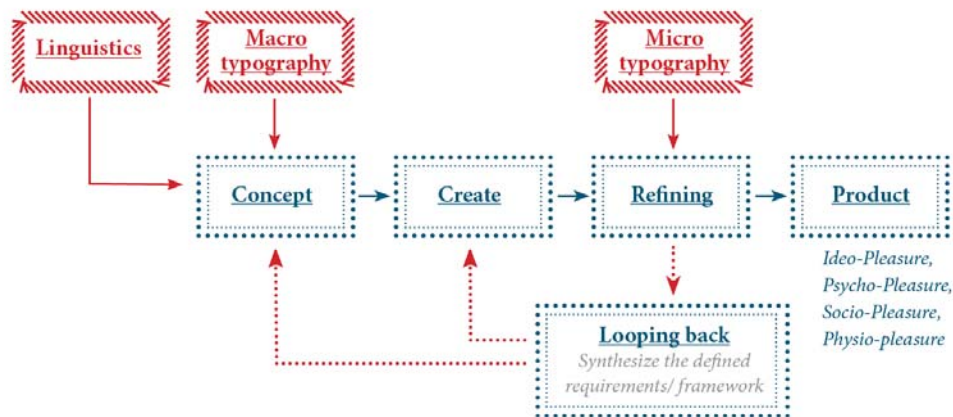
Constructed model inspired by Lawson, placing Kunz 'conditions in the process aiming at a product (ex. defined by Jordan's four pleasures).
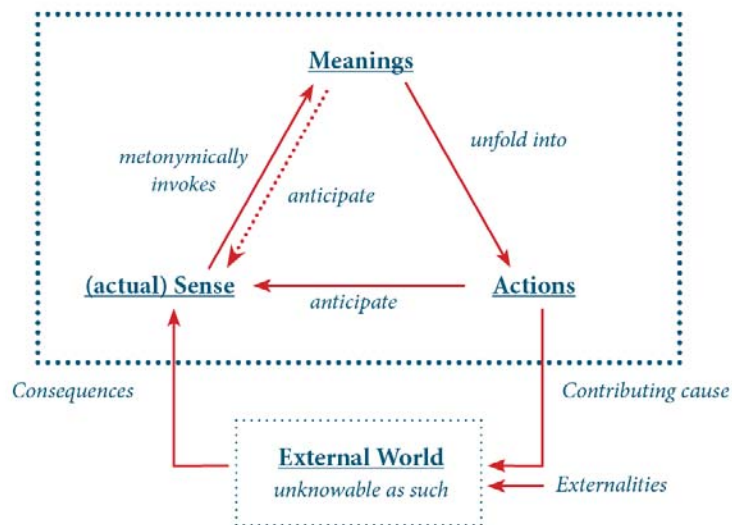
Krippendorffs model — Sense, meaning & action. One of the models used as a base in the paper.