A vernacular, mother tongue and mother language, and less frequently one sense of idiom and dialect, is the native language of a population located in a country or in an area defined on some other basis, such as a locality. For example, Navajo is a local language in the southwest of the United States, and English is the state language of a number of countries.

A vernacular is not a real language but is “an abstract set of norms.”
The funny thing is: I see print designers are looking at the language of interactivity, but I’m not sure interaction designers, because frequently they come from an engineering or computer science background, have been trained to think about the “language of visual communication” much if at all.
Before the digital age, design presumed you would receive information hands at your side, no touching required or expected. “Users” were a passive, rather than experiencers who in doing so might provide all manner of data-driven feedback.

Then, in the 1990s, the internet became the buzz. Ads and signage boasted about how the manufacturer had a website: “visit http://www.blahblahblah.com” Print ads might have a component featured on the website, a self-conscious “tie-in.” The company’s logo might be ready for a redesign, to have a “digital” look, create the sense it’s “in the know.” Now, it goes without saying. Designers understand a logo MUST be seen on a screen, possibly one as small as a smartphone, maybe nowhere else. Some designers might have never designed anything for print production, until one day out of the blue, somebody calls, emails, asking for a billboard. What should such a thing look like? Virtual has to become real.

Two questions to think about during the upcoming slideshow [please feel free to think of more!]:

- Do you think the role of the designer will be overtaken by the demands of the user, or do you think the user will become more reliant on designers to help develop a new language of visual communication?

- Do you think the language of the user will become more visual—graphic—or more word-based?
The essence of the New Typography is clarity. This puts it into deliberate opposition to the old typography whose aim was “beauty” and whose clarity did not attain the high level we require today. This utmost clarity is necessary today because of the manifold claims for our attention made by the extraordinary amount of [print], which demands the greatest economy of expression.

—Jan Tschichold 1929
I submit: The urge to create can be as powerful as the invidious forces of nature.

Vernacular is like an Acanthus:
A (weed)tree grows in Manhattan.
Or, is this as beautiful as an English wildflower garden?
An information weed.
Old Growth: Kentile Flooring, Brooklyn.
Garment District, Manhattan
(circa 1980, before the digital camera. Punk rock/no wave/new wave: black & white was all the rage).
times square, 1980.
Brooklyn Heights Bar, still hanging in there.
Neon helps perpetuate an appetite.
Painted-brick signage can be dated by “exchange name” as much as typographic style. “Algonquin,” suggests the roaring '20s.
LOWER MANHATTAN MANUFACTURING DISTRICT, now residential lofts. Given its condition, I'd guess they repainted this sign to enhance–authenticate–loft-living real-estate values.
“old-fashioned” style, but no exchange—now known as area code—tells me 1970s, or even more likely, the postmodern, retro-loving 1980s.
MEANWHILE, THE OMNIPRESENT WEEDS KEEP GROWING. THIS DRY CLEANER IS HEDGING HIS STYLE-BETS.
more weeds. bleeker street in manhattan.
DESIGNER/STYLIST PATRICIA FIELD KNOWS HOW TO WORK IT INTO HER OWN BRAND OF GARDEN, ON THE BOWERY.
Brooklyn Industries, hip Williamsburg-style clothes sold in Manhattan. Notice the bicycle wheels are the letters “O” but are also the everpopular circular shape...
Similarly, a “self-aware” gallery on the Bowery.
Another day, another exhibit. Window graphic updated, in this case emptied.
SCAFFOLD BRIDGING EVERYWHERE IN THE CITY. THIS VENDOR CHOSE TO PLANT A GARDEN RATHER THAN LET THE WEEDS TAKE OVER.
A little review: Time square at night, circa 1980, 35mm black & white film. (These are a couple of shots from a contact sheet.)
times square now, in the digital/on-off/boolean logic era; disney leads the way.
Times Square, old and new. Digital and analog. New York City is at its best when it demonstrates COEXISTENCE.
times square, 30 years later after the midori sign (p. 9).
A TYPICAL TIMES SQUARE CACOPHONY (WEEDS OR GARDEN?).
Digital signage (including motion design) in Times Square.
Digital signage, and QR (quick response) code. Not sure how many of us ever use QR codes, but here’s a use I consider vernacular, not to NYC specifically, but to a particular global culture: [http://youtu.be/f3qv2dSXQXk](http://youtu.be/f3qv2dSXQXk)
Old school, but badges resonate then and now.
LG and Pepsi digital badges. [Buttons. Icons.]
MY IPHONE: BADGES, BUTTONS, ICONS.
Have I already mentioned: Badges, Buttons, Icons?
Bowery storefront, inspired by one of those fake 3-D flash buttons.
How about “accordion” JavaScript or touchscreen panels? Ironically for a classical concert at Grace Church, in Manhattan.
More touch screenism, and HTML division of space. Also, while we're here, see the pretty paint on the ground?
THE HTML GRID AS THE LANGUAGE OF COMMERCE.
This building changes its ads as fast as any website can.
Panels, grids. Also, compelled to say, this “New York” montage is not very New York. We are not so uniform, we may debate weeds or wildflowers, but any way you call it, we are rarely so manicured.
DISNEYFIED, manicured, sanctioned. In other words, commodified graffiti. (Wall on the Bowery, which changes every few months.)
changed. Usually these walls are left alone, not tag-bombed, but not always. Not sure whether that denotes respect, or the opposite.
Spring Street and the Bowery, the real deal, never left alone.
Chelsea, gridless “raucous riot.”
1980s-born “Mars Bar” (recently shuttered) not so committed to its grid.
Mars Bar cont’d. Note the phone booth, antiquity of communication.
Phone-booth relic, as advertisement kiosk. Smartphone drop-down menu implied in layout, incongruous with what it sits on.
GRID PANELS IN AD, PHONE BOOTH NO LONGER OPERATIONAL, STILL HAS THE HANDSET! WHAT A FUNNY SIGNHOLDER TO THIS SMALL, INCREDIBLY CUTE, BOY.
While we’re still on the street: BUTTONS—ICONS—BADGES.
Buttons—icons—and one of my favorites: single rounded edge “tab”/file folder reference. You see that a lot on the web—or used to. It referenced the print world, to give a navigational context, and now has reverberated back to becoming a typical digital-friendly reference for print.
Going underground for a moment: subway signage, buttons—icons—rounded edge, and bonus: QR code.
MMS website doesn’t especially tie-in! The expectation of web language designed into the “print” version is not fulfilled.
back underground, subway signage: buttons, connectivity: linkage.
Buttons and badges, (note this designed garden versus the unmanicured: the “please” request).
DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION AD FOR THE NYTIMES. ARROW IS “BITMAPPED” TO IMPLY DIGITAL, THOUGH THAT WOULDN’T BE THE CASE IN MOST ACTUAL ONLINE SITUATIONS. EXAGGERATED PROPS TO THE DIGITAL ERA...
unambiguous connection to local website (grubhub), and vice-versa, because the aesthetic direction of the site involves paper textures, indicating this is a better way of ordering take-away food than tradition printed paper menus.
Panels, Grid, Academia as Hi-Tech.
DITTO THE HTML APPROACH, WITH NAV-BAR "PIPES" TO BOOT.
Busting out of the grid, a little “flashier,” yet maybe just a little familiar “navigation” at the top of the page.
The subway system in NYC is very old, it doesn’t want to own that reputation though. Current effort: Subway App.
 WHICH LOOKS LIKE THE SUBWAY CIRCA THE 1970s, CARE OF MASSIMO VIGNELLI, THE MOST MANICURED DESIGNER OF ALL, WHILE STILL KEEPING IT REAL.
but there was a time when wildflowers reigned: mosaic signage, without HTML preconceptions.
Yesterday and today: Classic NY scene, G-train button/badge.
ZIP-CAR BUTTON/BADGE, HYPERLINKS FASTER THAN TAKING THE G-TRAIN (OR MAYBE NOT!) WHILE WE’RE HERE, NOTE THE GROUND PAINT.
“T” IS FOR TAXI, CLICK HERE? AGAIN, IMPLYING HYPERLINK SPEED.
“T” IS ALSO FOR TUSCAN MILK TRUCK, “S” IS FOR SKYLINE.
WHAT SKYLINE CAN’T BE IMPROVED BY A LITTLE GRAFFITI?
WHILE WE’RE AT IT, TO CONTINUE MEANDERING THE NEIGHBORHOOD: THIS SIGNAGE MOST LIKELY PREDATES NAV-BARS; EITHER SOMEBODY WAS PRESENT, OR UNIMAGINATIVE.
union headquarters (circa?) predates hyperlink buttons, next to a brand new “café,” a more current repetition iteration.
NEW YORKERS SHARING SPACE.
CIRCLE/BADGE LOGO UPGRADE, BUT PAYLESS IS STILL SHODDY.
OLD-SCHOOL, BUT STILL EYE-CATCHING.
A beautiful old-fashioned theater feeling the need to prove its digital mettle. I designate this a *weed*. 
OLD-SCHOOL MILTON GLASER HANDLES ELECTRONICS AS MATERIALS, BLISSFUL IN ITS CONSTRAINTS, THEREFORE A **wildflower**.
Queens, New York, aspirational, harkening to U.S. history (Queens is the borough of immigrants more than any other in NYC). There's no market for a digital upgrade here.
Bleeker Street again. This image is not placed backwards; it’s a reference to a local newspaper, once printed at this location.
Starbucks, the universal language of coffee.
Which brings to mind a smaller, local franchise, logo/brand contains data entry reference, as in wifi enabled global is local. While we’re here, text-tattoo.
more body-vernacular.
on the subject of hand-written, the fire station stakes its turf, as well as the department of buildings (street painting).
BROOKLYN: MORE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CREW. PRINT?
some more instructions, no need to design it, but visual inspiration happens anyway! Oh and, print as in blueprint!
It's everywhere, the latest crop of NYC vernacular.
NOW OFFICIALLY, HAPPILY, USURPED, REITERATED, BY LOCAL COMMERCE.
Speaking of print: NEW YORK TIMES AD, LOCAL PAPER WITH GLOBAL ASPIRATIONS, THIS IS A SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO A FLASH “SLIDESHOW”*

*HOWEVER, THE WEBPAGE IMAGE DOESN'T FUNCTION!
Another print ad, (QR code, moiré! ) web page connects visually.

PROGRESS IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

When the construction of a housing development can rebuild an entire community.

HOW AN INVESTMENT IN A HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IS REBUILDING AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY IN NEW ORLEANS

After one of New Orleans' oldest public housing developments was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, we invested in rebuilding it from the ground up. Our Urban Investment Group partnered with an experienced developer, McCormack Baron Salazar, as well as former tenants, neighborhood organizations, and state and local housing agencies to enable families and businesses to return home. Today, Harmony Oaks is a community where neighbors can come together—on their new front porches, at the local community center or the nearest playground. See the story at goldmansachs.com/progress
Local informational mailer: Buttons, Icons, QR Code.

Do you want to clean your closets for a good cause and a green city from the convenience of your own building?

If so, check out re-fashionNYC, a brand-new partnership between the City of New York and Housing Works.

re-fashionNYC:
- will place donation bins in apartment buildings of 10 units or more, as well as commercial and institutional sites.
- is a free, convenient service that includes on-call visits by our staff to pick up the contents when your bin is full.
- guarantees that 100% of your donations go to charitable causes and makes it easy to get tax receipts.
- helps New Yorkers take waste reduction to a new level, and keep as much as tens of thousands of perfectly good clothing, linens, shoes, and accessories out of landfills every year.

Visit nyc.gov/refashion to learn more.
Buttons, icons, are a universal language...
Support when your daughter develops asthma, you worry that she won’t be confident enough to do the active things she loves. And there are specialists, lots of doctors, lots of advice. And you worry about that, too. Your hands are already full. At UnitedHealthcare, we understand. That’s why we have tools that help her pediatrician coordinate your child’s care and make sure all her doctors are on the same page. So, everyone works as a team, and you can all breathe a little easier.

At UnitedHealthcare, we’re using our experience and our access to a vast range of health care information to make health care simpler and more responsive. So that you feel like you’re being treated like a human being, and your daughter can go on feeling like she’s part fish. We’ve more than 78,000 people looking out for 70 million Americans. That’s Health in Numbers."
Here are those questions again, and, what else might you have noticed?

- Do you think the role of the designer will be overtaken by the demands of the user, or do you think the user will become more reliant on designers to help develop a new language of visual communication?

- Do you think the language of the user will become more visual—graphic—or more word-based?