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**Course on Visual Semiotics for Visual Communication**

**By**

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**Lecture 14: Visual Semantics for Visual Communication  
(contd.)**

Hello students welcome back to our course on visual semiotics for visual communication.

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So in our last lecture we talked about the mental model, conceptual model and affordances. In mental model we talked about how people have the understanding of the world and that model remains with that person. It remains with a particular group of user and they try to map this mental model with the conceptual model which the designer is designing. So what a designer is designing as a conceptual model there they are putting in all the efforts in understanding the

mental model of other users and then framing something so that this mental models have a unison.

Now in today's lecture we are going to talk about metaphors, metaphor is a very interesting element that is used by visual designers, artists, product designers, architects, many, many fields poets, writers, many of the creative crates use metaphor for explaining or communicating with its audience, with their audience, they use the concept of metaphors. And visual communication has no exception, we also take help of metaphor over here.

Now metaphor is the continuation of our last lecture in a way that metaphor relies on something which is again relative to our mental model. So metaphor is by definition it is something which relates to something two things which is dissimilar so it is something which is relating to another thing which is dissimilar in some fashion, but you are drawing some kind of comparison and making it in unison, you are making one concept out of it.

So that is something which is related to your mental model for sure, because you are leveraging whatever mental model or particular user is having, whatever mental model understanding he has got, you are leveraging that understanding, merging it with something different and then creating some kind of newer meaning, but at the same time you are merging this mental model with your conceptual model and that is how newer establishment takes place.

So why metaphor has remained or existed in the mainstream communication channel is because it brings with it an essence of how I would say an essence of creativity, an essence of excitement, an essence of novelty that is something which is prevalent to this. Otherwise, say for example we have given the mental model of a plant growing you will keep on showing the same mental model in every fashion.

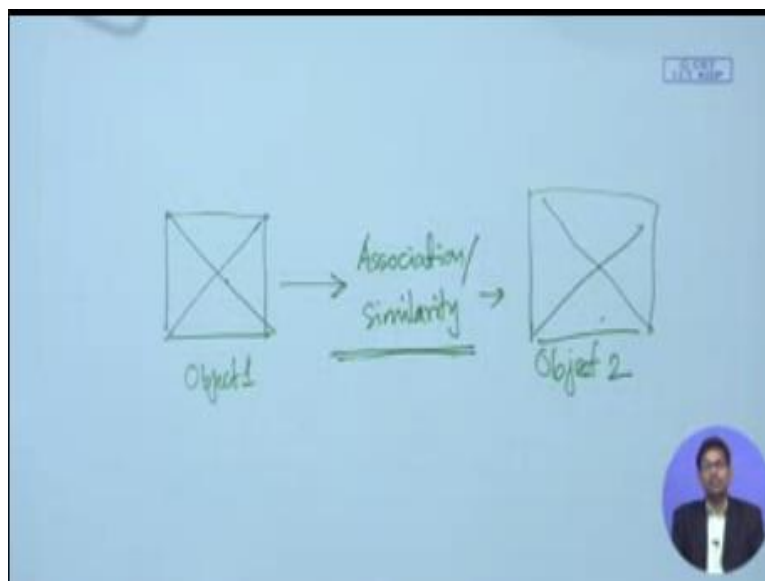
But now say for example, you are showing the plant growing blooming and fruiting you are taking this mental model and mapping it with say the growth of a butterfly. A butterfly grows up cocoons, you know comes out of the pupa stage and then flies and then goes into the next stage.

So you are bringing two different things together and then trying to communicate something maybe the stage of life or whatever it is.

This is the rough example I have given, I will talk about other examples when we talk in detail about metaphor. But this is where you are taking example of something else merging it together and evolving a newer concept a newer idea. So this has inherent with it, the sense of novelty, the sense of creativity, the sense of excitement which manier times in communication people seek for it.

And that brings us the aesthetic value, it brings us the novel aspect of your design or theme through this. So that is why metaphor is a very, very important tool that manier times we use, but we should know about the integrities of the metaphors.

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So if we look at the definition of metaphor a visual metaphor is the representation of a person, place, thing or idea by means of visual image that suggests a particular association or point of similarity. So basically it is the representation so again we are coming back into the representation when we are talking about visual metaphor so it is representation of something

else which we are showing for communicating something different okay so the image so idea by visual image that suggest a particular association or point of similarity now this is very important thing to understand in a metaphor that you are using a object an object you are using something else.

So say for example you are using this particular so this we are calling it object one and this object one is trying to create some kind association so association are similarity with your obese to that you are drawing reference to so you have object 1 and object 2 and you are drawing a an association or a similarity between these two and that is what a metaphor does say for example I am giving you a linguistic metaphor say you say that life is like journey or life is like a road okay.

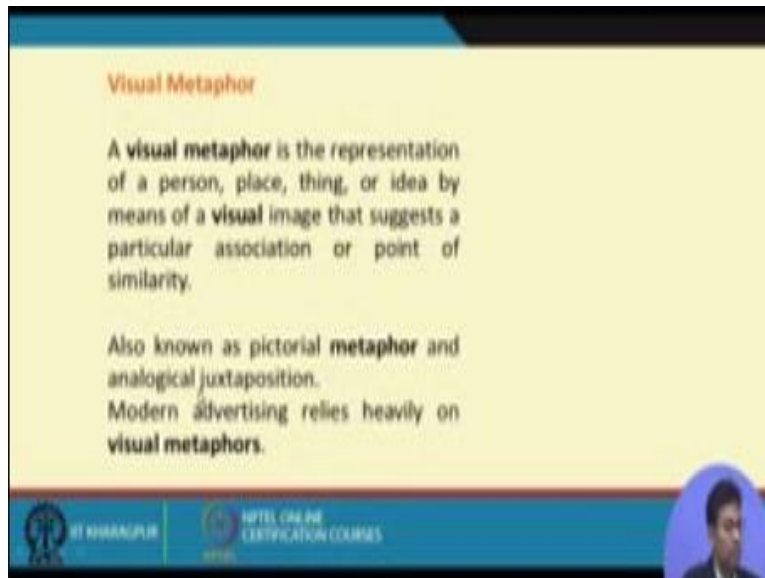
So this is a metaphor you are taking object 1 which is life so you have the notion of life and you have an understanding of life you have a mental module what life is and when you have another object which is object 2 which is verity different from what life is object 2 is a completely different object from what life is and now again you have mental model about object 2 what a road is understanding of what is road is and see how we are knowing bring these two things together.

We are creating some kind of association or a similarity and we are saying that life is like a road which now means that perhaps the metaphor that you are drawing is a road is meandering a road is long you have to travel some distance and life is also like that so this how the metaphor comes into picture and it works in reality in case of visual metaphor we are taking image to do this so we are combing say tow different images and then we are drawing an association with but one thing which is very important to be noted in metaphor is these two objects at the end of the day in case of metaphor they become 1 they are treated in uncial.

So weather it is life weather it is road they become one they have properties they have associations which are one thing which you are trying to talk about so maybe it is a long road it is meandering road it has and twists so all these things the road and life merged together and talk

about one thing so this is one very crucial aspect not in our metaphor when we talk about metaphor.

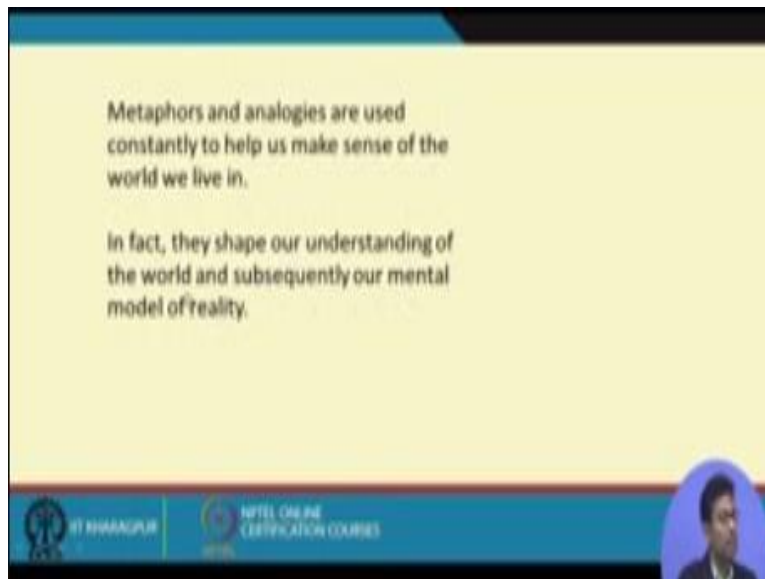
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So visual metaphor is also known as the pictorial metaphor or the analogical juxtaposition. We will talk about analogy in a while so and modern advertising industry is one which relies heavily on metaphor because as I said metaphor brings with it a sense of novelty, a sense of creativity, and as soon as you do that attraction factor increases so advertising industries are one of the visual communication industries.

Where you need to grab attention of people, you need to be very attractive in your presentation and metaphor helps in doing that so it always evokes some kind of response so it involves some kind of interrelation with and that brings with it the charm of using a metaphor. Then that is the whole reason why we are dedicating one lecture on metaphor and looking into details of that.

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So now metaphors and analogies are used constantly to help us make sense of the world we live in. In fact, this shapes our understanding of the world and subsequently our mental model of reality. So as you see, aging the mental is coming into picture. Metaphors and analogies are something as you are aware of by the team itself. You draw an analogy of something, so say for example, you are saying that the birds are in sky and the fishes are in water, so it is like the analogy or drawing fishes live in water, similarly birds live in sky or birds fly in sky, so which is their domain and the fishes domain is something else, so you are drawing an analogy between these two objects or concepts of them.

And then you bring a sense of comparison between them or you are trying to establish certain kind of communication, so this is what analogy does, whereas metaphor is where you are bringing two different objects or concepts together and then you are drawing some kind of association and which is forming a similar thing which is becoming a one theme together, so this is how the whole thing shakes up.

Now what it does is, metaphors and analogies help us understand our volumetric better, so this is one of the differentiators which differentiates human beings with other animals is the fact that we

can put together two different objects and look into our metaphor we can decide first and understand and comprehend the metaphor and make some meaning out of a metaphor, so is it not amazing.

That a human ability where we are merging two dissimilar things at the same time we are making a meaning out of it and we are finding some amount of joy in being so, so that is the you know very well what you say a very unique aspect of human perception and human communication and there is a lot of meaning association around it, so the richer the metaphor is the more which the richer the metaphor that you can create if the richer the communication that happens through your whatever signifier that you are using.

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A metaphor is basically an implied comparison that brings together two dissimilar objects or things.

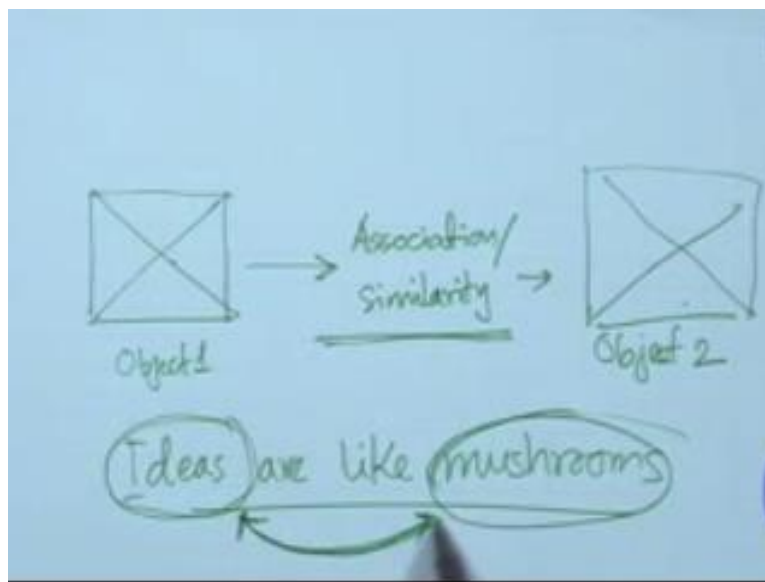
The two things that are being compared make up the metaphor, which asserts that two things that are not alike are in fact the same.

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So now a metaphor is basically an implied comparison that brings together two dissimilar objects or things the two things that are being compared make up a metaphor it asserts the two things that they are not alike are in fact the same, so this is what we are being discussing so far so what we try to mean is that in metaphor what we are bringing together is two dissimilar things two dissimilar concepts, objects.

So we are bringing it together and then we are drawing some kind of comparison we are forcing the user to draw some kind of comparison use their intellect and then create a meaning association between these two and at the end of the entire cycle of the metaphor you would find that they are not different but they are actually one so they are together forming one concept or an association so here we have shown you the example of mushrooms. So if we say the ideas are like mushrooms so let me write it down.

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Say ideas are like mushrooms or we use a visual metaphor of mushroom over here we have shown ideas are like mushroom, so what is happening here idea is an object or concept over here and mushroom is another object or concept over here and then you are trying to put an association with these dissimilar things and idea you know syntax, semantically is very different from mushroom.

As such so one is a vegetable one is a you know a living organism idea is a concept which is a mental process which is more philosophically in nature, so these two are very dissimilar where if you look at all of the aspects syntax, semantic, pragmatic wise they are very dissimilar but when

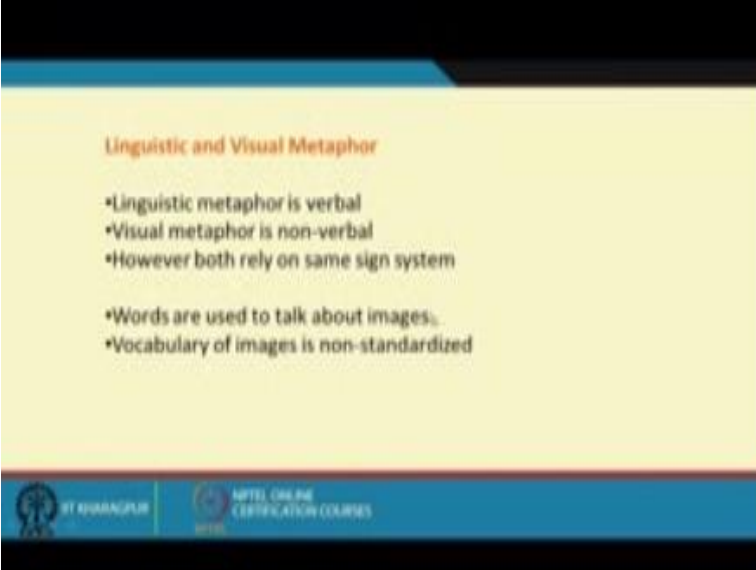


we are putting them together we are looking at some of their properties this and we are bringing them bringing an association with it.

So if I now ask that how idea if I say ideas are like mushroom what is that mental model that you have got and what is that idea what is that message that you are picking out from this, so basically a metaphor is working over here the ideas may be grow very fast this spot like a mushroom they grow they come up and then in no time they take some shape and grow up so that is the message that is the communication that I am trying to do.

When I am using this metaphor so now this particular communication would not have been possible if I was not bringing these two different objects together and then we are drawing a comparison and we look at the similarities and then we are merging these two things into one ultimately the idea is that you are trying to put forward that ideas grow very fast and they expert out and you know text some shape which is like mushroom so basically these two things no longer you know become two different entities but they merged to get that to bring out an ideas. So this is what a metaphor does in short.

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**Linguistic and Visual Metaphor**

- Linguistic metaphor is verbal
- Visual metaphor is non-verbal
- However both rely on same sign system
  
- Words are used to talk about images.
- Vocabulary of images is non-standardized

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So there are two types of metaphors we encounter so one is linguistic metaphor so linguistic metaphor is more or less verbal there are essential differences which is very, very evident linguistic metaphor is the one we encountered when we talk about many of the examples which I was talking about our linguistic metaphor so life is like a road or you know life is like drama stage or you say the education system is like a bunch of suavity so they are all need together and you take some path and it round and round that is jumbled up.

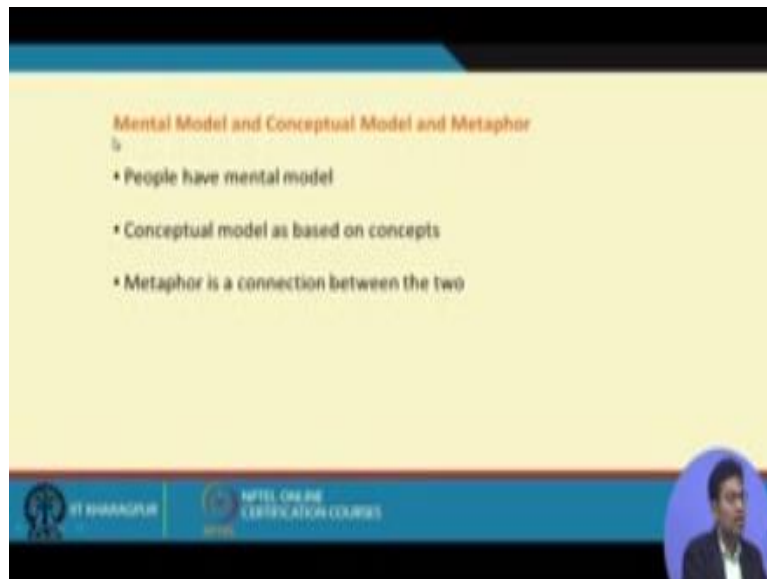
So whatever we are saying these are verbal mechanisms of establishing out metaphor so these are the verbal metaphors that you have got linguistic metaphor and then you have got the visual metaphor, visual metaphor is difficult in a way for its understanding of meaning is because of the fact. But is because of the fact that even when we are looking at a visual and we are bringing into different objects together in a visual field you are trying to draw a metaphor over there.

The thing is that you still rely on linguistic aspect you read an image you communicate and image you talk about an image still using some language so what it is essentially means is that there is no standardized vocabulary for images that is one of the things why we are doing this course we are trying to understand the vocabulary of images and there exist a vocabulary of images that is something we are trying to understand.

But it is very difficult to establish a standardized vocabulary for images so all of these comes images come together and create some kind of metaphor, which is difficult many a times to communicate we will show you some of the examples which is very difficult so what is that used to talk about image that is one of the difficulties we have and vocabulary of images is non standardized.

So different people can have different interpretations different mechanisms are use know to art work a similar that way different conceptual models mental models interact with each other and hence the metaphors tend to vary, but never the less good designs are always where you get the metaphor straight and the user understands that.

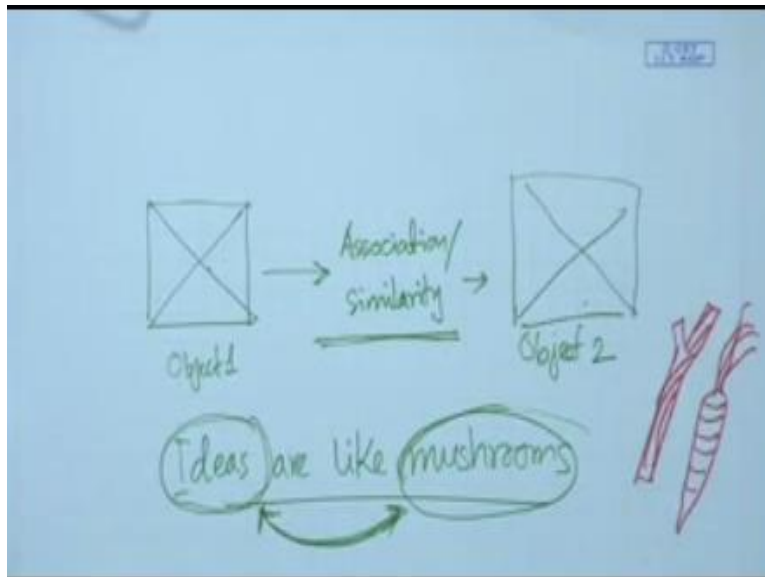
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So we will look at some of the qualities that we have got so now we will come to a stage where we will try to understand the mental model the conceptual model and the metaphor, so what we understood is people have mental model with them so everyone develop some mental model and then the designer comes up with a conceptual model so anything any design concept which is taking shape takes a conceptual model into action and then metaphor helps in bridging the gap between this mental model and the conceptual model.

So what it essentially means is say I am coming with a conceptual model for this pen, so I have developed schematic concept around this pen and which is somehow fixed with the mental model of people because they must have used a pencil, they must have used a similar pen before so they know that this pen is to be used this way but now we are bringing the bridge could be established by a metaphor, so say now I am designing this particular pen.

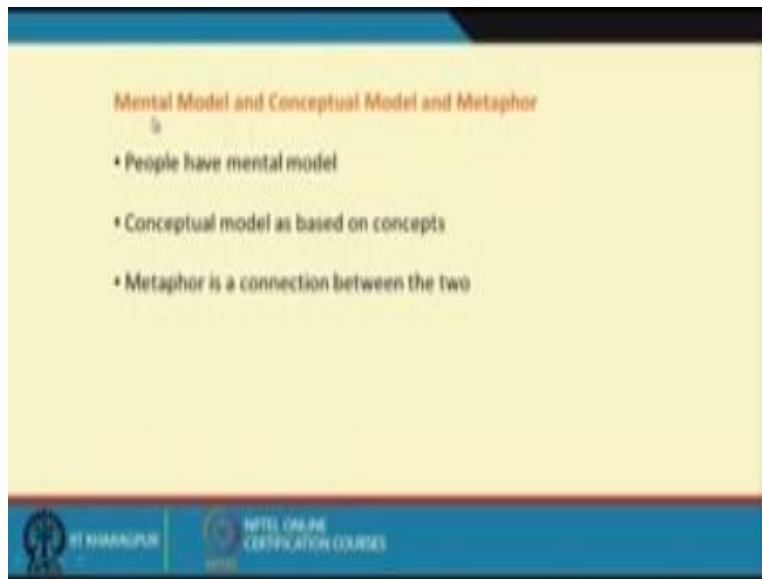
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I am using a metaphor of a say a stick so I am using the metaphor of a stick over here or say vegetables so I am using a carrot, so I am using the metaphor of another object bringing it together and this acts this particular metaphor that I have chosen that is another object which I am merging with the pen what it essentially does is this is not a very good metaphor.

I agree in this particular case just to make you understand that many a times metaphor serves as a bridge between the mental model and the conceptual model something that you are trying to develop and something which is establish you try to put forward a metaphor somewhere in between so the intellect of the intellectual capability of both the parties can work in this metaphor level, so that one aspect.

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Mental Model and Conceptual Model and Metaphor

- People have mental model
- Conceptual model as based on concepts
- Metaphor is a connection between the two

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When we talk about mental model conceptual model and the metaphor so people have the mental model conceptual model are based on some concepts and metaphor acts as a connection between these two.

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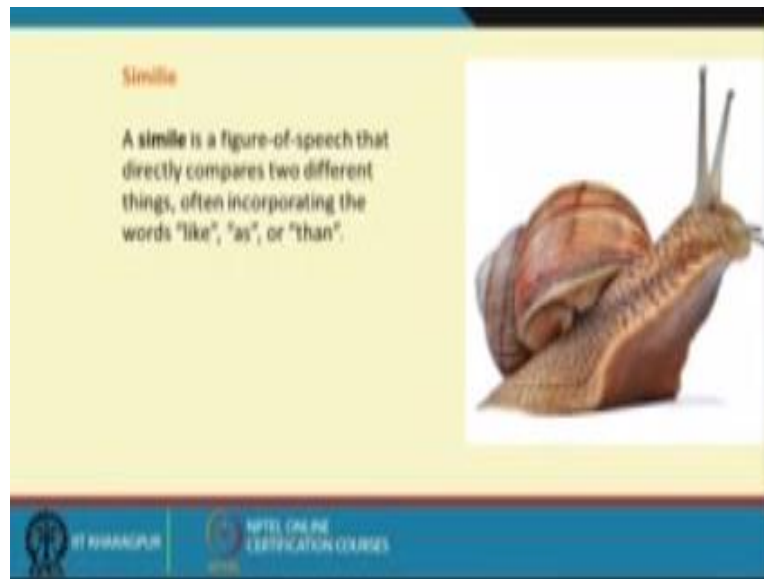


No we talked about analogy as such so just like a metaphor we have talked about it an analogy as a search that there is a connection between the two similar things however an analogy implies the dead it actually difference between the two things while metaphor treats them as be in the same so this is very, very essential difference between metaphor and analogy in metaphor analogy you try to show that there are two dissimilar things but you are trying to establish the same connection between them and at the end of they will become one.

Where is in analogy give the difference between these two are kept a sanity of the difference is kept you know as it is we still rely on the difference and you talk about that this particular image have shown is like birds are for sky and fishes are for water so there is a difference between these two things though you are drawing the analogy that they are you are talking about their habitat and you know how they are they use particular domain area for their living.

But you are still having a very, very strong difference between the birds are a different thing there in sky they are very different whereas the fishes are in sea or water and they are very different. You are drawing an analogy but you are maintaining the difference but that is not so the case in my defer, something we need to realize.

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Then we talk about simile so simile is very much used in literature so I have shown you this image of as slow as a snail so if you say that he is as slow as a snail or the process is as slow as a snail so this is simile where you say it is like this it is as this so when you use then you know he is slower even slower than a snail or something like that this is the simile we draw together which is heavily used in visual metaphor and in visual communication where you are drawing this simile who is like what who are to is not like what and you draw these similes.

But even remember in simile we still emphasize on the difference okay so a person is as slow as a snail but you have the entity of the snail being different animal and the object or the person as a differentiate, the thing which we are connecting up is by a common property, okay so this is how the simile is used so it is figure of speech and directly compares two different things.

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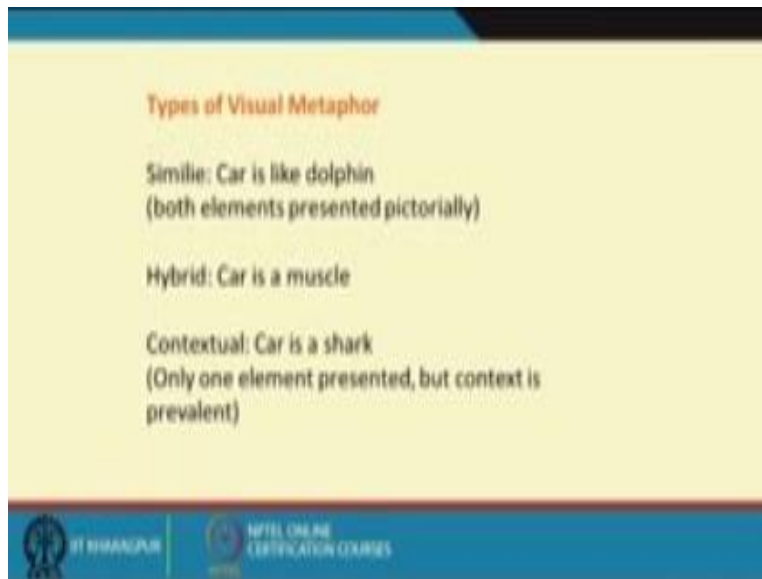


Then many a times we use allegory, allegory is another device is which is often use to present an idea the principle or meaning which can often be presented in a visual way some view and allegory as extended metaphor that communicates it message through an action to symbolic figure or representation or something, so allegory is essentially you can see that is an extension of metaphor say we say bravery is like a lion okay so bravery is a virtue and that you are allegorically treating or connecting it with the lion okay.

So honestly is like a horse or something like that when you are connecting at up with the concept you are matching it with the with an allegory which is extension of the metaphor, so many a times we use allegory as well.

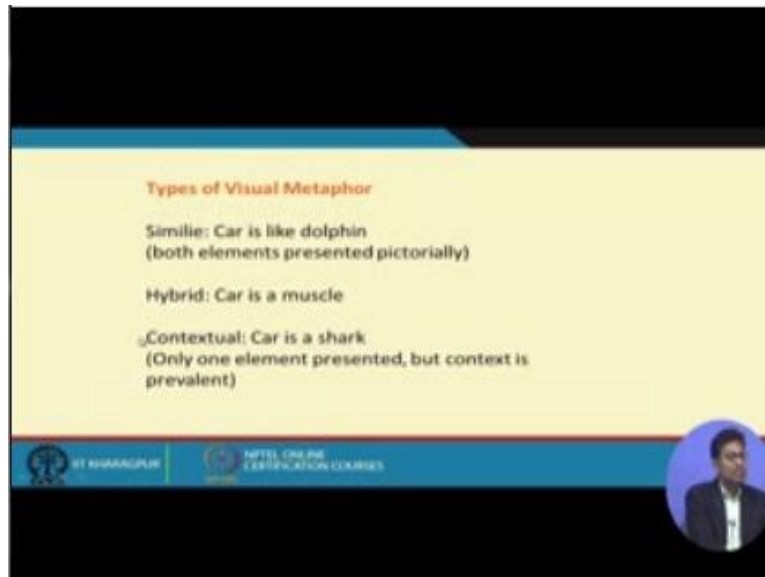


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So now coming to three disting types of metaphor based on their physical properties or their how do I say their visual properties that we have got when we talk about visual metaphors so we can classify the in to three categories based on the visual quality so the first on is the simile we talked about simile is like where you are doing a direct compression and these kind of metaphors both the objects are visually present in the most of the cases .So I have given you an example, where I am taking about.

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Car is like a dolphin okay, so I am saying car like a dolphin in a booster and what have done is I am showing the picture of a car, and I am showing the picture of a dolphin, so both the objects are present together and that gives you a simile that this car is like a dolphin it is smooth and you know effective demonically design things like that, whatever it is but the idea which are banking the type of metaphors that you are using is that of a simile.

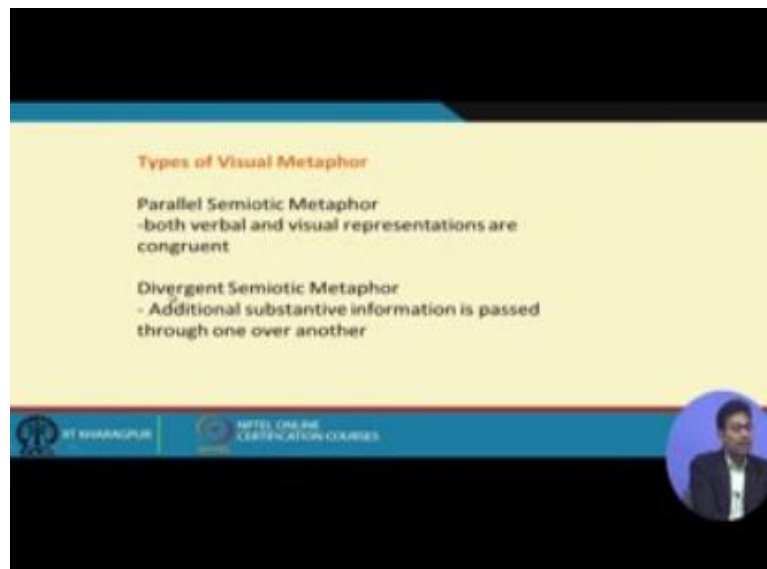
This is like this, and there in conjunction and they both are presented so that is when we doing a metaphor which is mostly simile in lecture. Now we come to the hybrid method the other one is conceptual, sorry contextual where only one element is present so we will come to this a little later which was called diverged synoptic approach here the context is very important. So if I say the car is like a shark I am not showing the car anymore I am just showing the road and the fern of a shark.

Cutting to that road, so that the road is there and I showed fern of a shark passing through that road so this is implied by context you can implied this road and the car is very fact and effective and aggressive like a shark as travelers in a sea. I am showing that's ,so I am using only one

partial object but context that I am sitting of the imaginary that is give a contextual metaphor. And hybrid is with the one where we are using both of them in many times.

Both the objects are present they merged with each other so car is like a muscle, so I am show the muscle over here and car is merged with this in the visual the car is merged into the muscle so I am showing the objects I am showing the part or property context of it and I am creating a hybrid metaphor through this, these could be three different types of metaphors based on it physical appearance.

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And based on the semiotic concept there could be two types of metaphor, one is parallel semiotic metaphor, so parallel semiotic metaphor is where we having multimedia, we have having both verbal and visual media which are congruent which are talking of the same thing so that is parallel semiotic metaphor we are taking about so they are congruent, they are talking about same thing.

So say for example, when you say the car is like a dolphin and I am showing the car and dolphin together there is absolute congruent between the verbal and visual metaphors where us divergent

semiotic metaphor one substitution is the other, one information might not be present but it is substantial the information in the other, so say for example, when I talked about the contextual example the card is like a shark.

What I say the car is as fast as shark or else aggressive as a car that immediately brings in car it is substantive the message that you are showing in the image it is bringing in the concept aeration with it. Which is additional? Substantive information is passed through one media over another so this brings us to the entire understanding of metaphor different types of metaphor and hope you can utilize it. In many you are design effectively thank you.