

**NPTEL  
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**Course  
On  
Visual Semantics for Visual Communication**

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**Lecture 15: Visual Semiotics for Visual Communication  
(Contd.)**

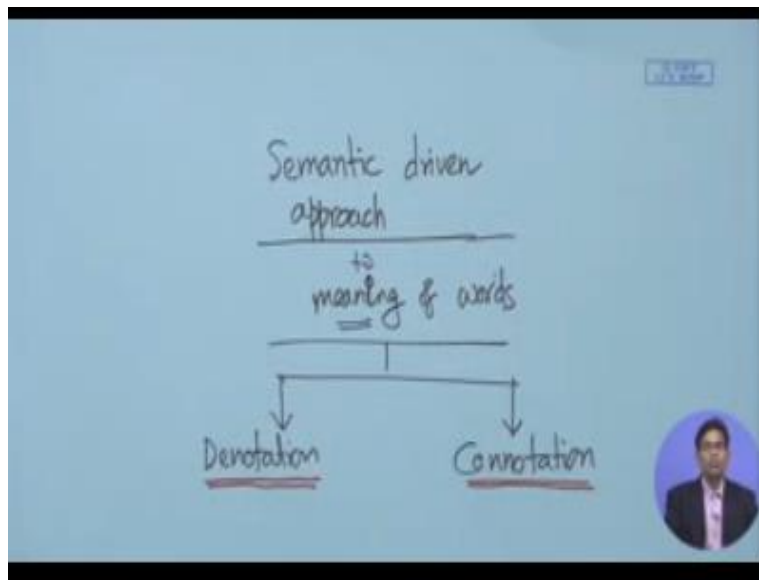
Hello students welcome to our course on visual semiotics or visual communication in first few lectures we have been dealing more with visual field and how we encounter visual perception of different forms we have learnt about gestalts application where we have looked into differentiate how they are arranged and how do we perceive that. So basically from the communicational aspects of human communication how people communicate global linguistic to a visual domain which we talked about that.

Then we in a week 2 we looked into the visual perception as such and how visual communication takes place through visual perception and in the week 3 now we are getting into details of how we perceive things or rather what is semiotics when we talk about visual communication we are looking at its different components and we are looking at the visual field or the things or objects or elements that you see around you or manier times we are designing those objects are designing elements and then presenting it.

And based on that our mind is reacting and doing some judgment towards it. So we have looked into gestalts as one of the applications how our mind look such visuals and then make summing friends, we looked at the metaphors how it works in practice, we looked at mental models and associated activities how these images are being formed in our mind and then we are making some connections with it.

So as a continuation to that today we will learn about two very important aspect which has again derived from our linguistic background, but it is heavily used in visual communication. And it is completely semantic driven which is meaning driven.

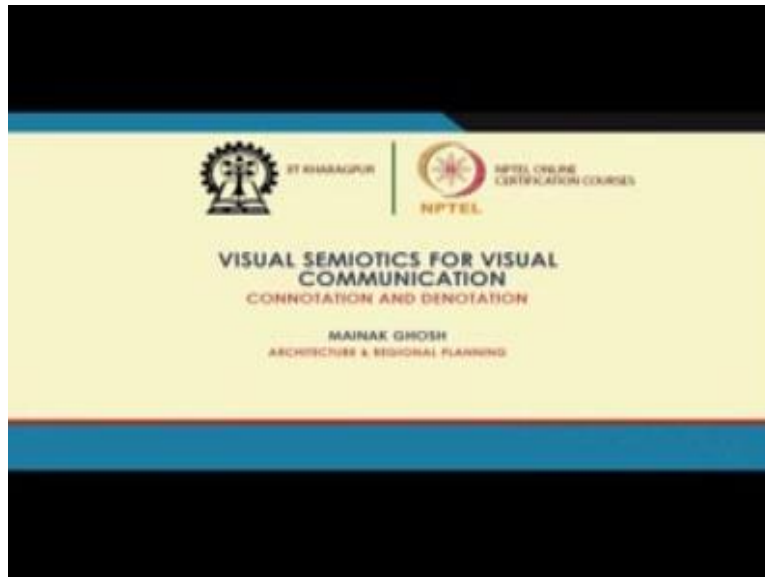
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So what essentially we are going to look at today is semantic driven approach. So we are looking at a semantic driven approach to meaning of course, semantic is related to meaning so we are going for a approach to meaning of words. So it started with the concept of words, so when different words are involved and there is a meaning associated with the word we developed a method for getting into this approach.

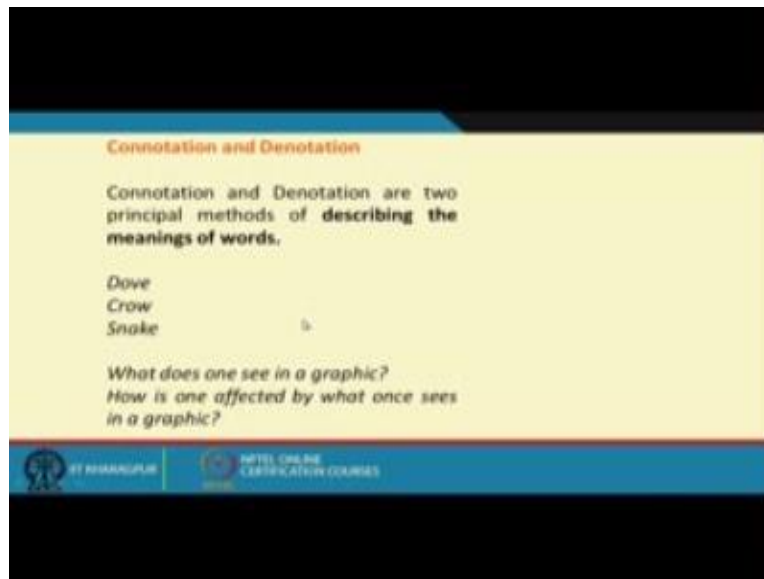
And these two terminologies, these two methodologies which works together is known as denotation and connotation. So today we are look at these two areas one is denotation and the other is connotation.

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So both of them has lot of prevalence in study of semiotics and more precisely this particular domain relates to meaning how we associate meaning to certain words or functions. And then look at how they act in reality, so from semantics two pragmatics, what is happening is dependent on this denotation and connotation. So we will today have a deep dive into denotation and connotation and have a look at that how that is playing a role.

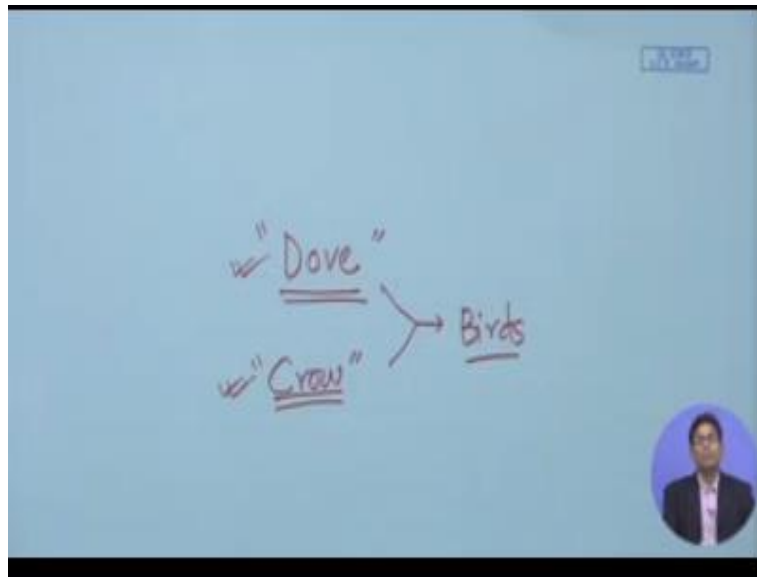
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So if we go by these two principal methods the connotation and denotation are two principal methods for describing meaning of words. So as I have been discussing whenever there is a word which is put in front of you immediately you will try to make a meaning out of that word and so first comes the syntax the structure of the word there will be alphabets, there will be phrases and of English language or whichever language is concerned so they will be all put together.

And you will encounter, you will receive the syntax of that particular sign, once you have done that immediately you will try to dealt into the meaning of that particular thing that you have perceived right. So when you are doing that two methods runs out, one is the denotative method and the other is the connotative method. So that is the in crux when we encounter with the word similar thing we will see that we encounter an image we get into a similar mode.

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So say for example, if I give you a word, if I talk about a word say dove okay. So whenever as soon as I write this things as D-O-V-E immediately as a syntax you know that these alphabets are coming together and forming a word in English. But as soon as I do this, I write this you encounter this stimuli what happens when you are looking at the linear aspect of it, what exactly does it happen.

So immediately you start looking into what this word denotes, so that is what is denotation. So you are looking at this particular word and you are looking at what it denotes okay, what exactly linguistically it is trying to denote and hence you would try to make out a meaning. Similarly, if I write crow another word, so dove is one kind of word and I write crow which is another kind of word that also has four alphabets they are coming together, forming a word.

But now try to realize both of them are birds right, so it is denoting something related to bird or a creature something like that it is, it denotes something linguistically. So and you know the characteristic of that bird what it linguistically means. But then comes up very, very interesting aspect where we are now talking about the connotational aspect, how do you associate these two

birds as is the crow same as dove, does the feeling which the crow evokes in you is same as dove or are there difference.

So this is where it is a very interesting aspect of human perception and human meaning making where we not only look into the denotative aspect go by the literally meaning what the dictionary is talking about. But we look at our association with these words, so there comes the question of pragmatics coming into picture, there comes the question of culture, society, all of it coming into picture where you have certain connotation associated with these birds, these two different birds.

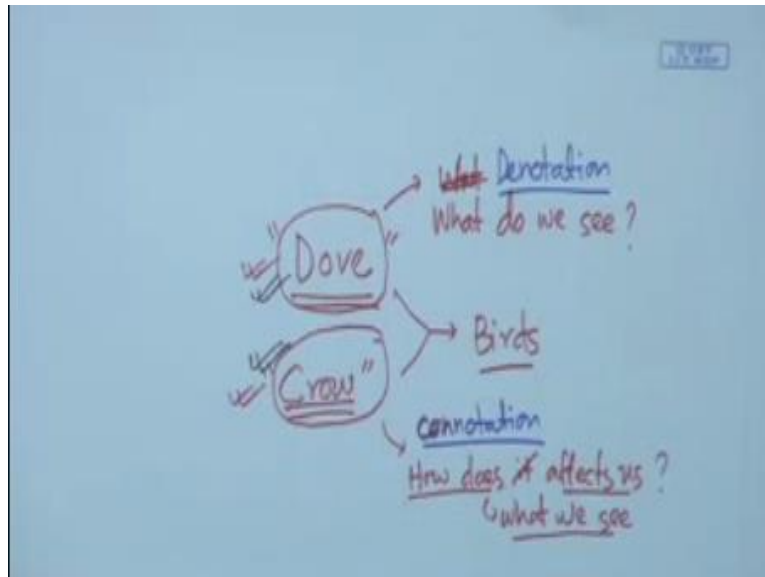
And mind it when you write a word over here it is nothing but the concept okay, concept of a bird or a creature and you have associated lot of things with that creature. So this is how our meaning or understanding about what we are encountering, here we are encountering a word it could be a visual say image of a bird and image of a crow and image of a dove. And what it will lets to you, there also there is a visual syntax which is coming into picture.

So if I am not showing you the photograph I am drawing a dove and drawing a crow, if the grammar of drawing is not correct you will never realize that is a dove or crow so that is, I the first part where the syntax coming together is like the alphabets coming together and making the word so that is vocabulary we talked about the vocabulary of images in the last lecture.

So here we are trying to create a vocabulary using some elements principles all of metaphors of this coming together mental model conceptual model all of this coming together and you are trying to create an image okay in case of visual communication so that is the syntax part you have formed an image and now the interpreting is there to receive this particular stimuli and make some judgment about this image right.

So as soon as we try to do that we are trying to make some meaning associated with it we take this braches one is what we are seeing so now coming visual communication how do we differentiate connotation and denotation so for denotation it is something you put forward this question what am I seeing okay what is exactly that I am seeing in the graphics.

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So if we look at this particular text again so what are we actually seeing as a graphic so imagine this to be graphic they are no longer words it is to do with what do we see sorry what do we see in the graphic so for denotation a visual in case of visual denotation the way our mind works is what are we seeing that particular graphic so it is trying to it is like that bottom up approach we talked about it is trying to look at different elements it is trying to look at the arrangement it is trying to look at it as hole rather than you know investigating the parts and having done all that you are trying to just see.

What is being presented to you in that graphic so this is what denotation holds but what about happens in case of connotation in case of connotation sorry so this is what denotation does we are trying to look at what it is what you are seeing and in case of connotation the important question which comes into picture who does who does it affect us so how does what we see affects us so for connotation we are going by this particular aspect how does what we see affects is so here comes a difference our mind works when it comes to connotation and the denotation in case of denotation we are look at what is being presented.

So we are look at what do we see okay so we are only going but it is and trying to understand that okay so that's I one part of meaning making or very essential part of meaning making where whatever your seeing around you are looking at it trying to investigate perceiving it and then you are trying to make a meaning of what am I seeing there so that is one part of meaning making but the say very interesting and very what you say inherent aspect of human communication is the other part that we are talking about here is the connotative aspect where you are no longer you are not only looking at the what you are seeing but you are also trying investigated.

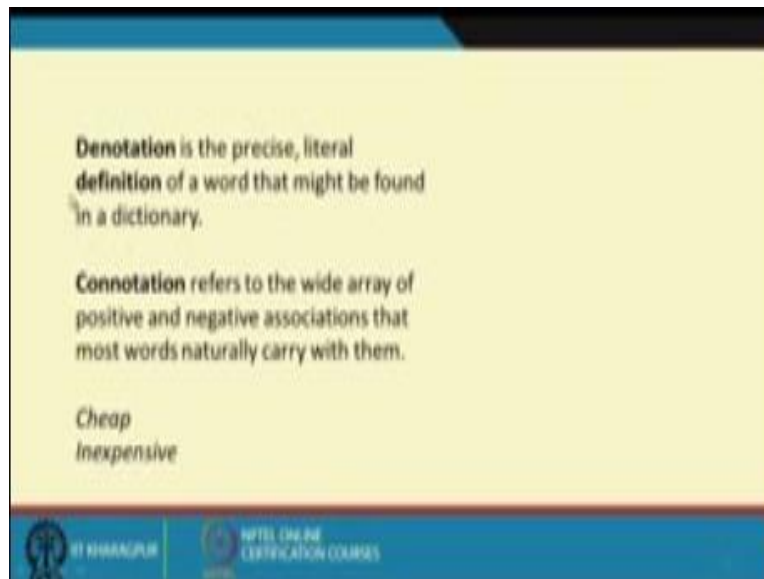
How does it affect him what are the emotional attributes which are related with what we are seeing and how it as affected in the pass how it as affected me in the society how does the culture look at it and based on that you are making some meaning so if we come back with this understand to this example of dove and crow now by denotation you will you know by denotative method you will look at these two objects and try to make some meaning out it we will look at these two object of crow and dove and try to make some meanings.

So below to the you know some kind of brides and things like that but how does these two bird affect us is dove related to peace a very came creature something like that very lovable something like this kind of aspect also comes into picture when you are making a meaning out of it and this is very essential when it comes to visual meaning making because the treatment that you are doing on the visual imagery.

The kind of you know elements and principles being applied on the visual will affect your connotative aspect so you will try to make associations of this short and that will be very different from one and other so the association the affect that a crow as is very different from that of a dove as and that will impact your meaning making that will impact your semantics.



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So we move on to the next slide where we are defining these two aspects denotation is precise is dilatorily definition of a word that might be found in a dictionary so if we go by linguistic approach of denotation it is nothing but what the dictionary is taking about you are just looking at word by way of how it is logistically defined okay so you are just looking at it meaning linguistics method.

What happens in terms of visual we have discussed that earlier in case of a visual we go by it syntax okay we are only going by it is representation what is happening over there and we are analyzing that representation so we have talked about the signified and the signifier so here in the signifier aspect there is a representation and we are look at that particular representation and we are trying to make some judgment based on that what are we trying to see over there and this is you know parallel to the linguistic approach of where we look up to into dictionary.

Unfortunately for a visual vocabulary we do not have visual dictionary manier times we have a pictured dictionary which I available but a visual dictionary is something which grows with us with experience all of us have mental model what we were talking about we to have a dictionary based on our visual perception and then we try to match with that we try to match the meaning

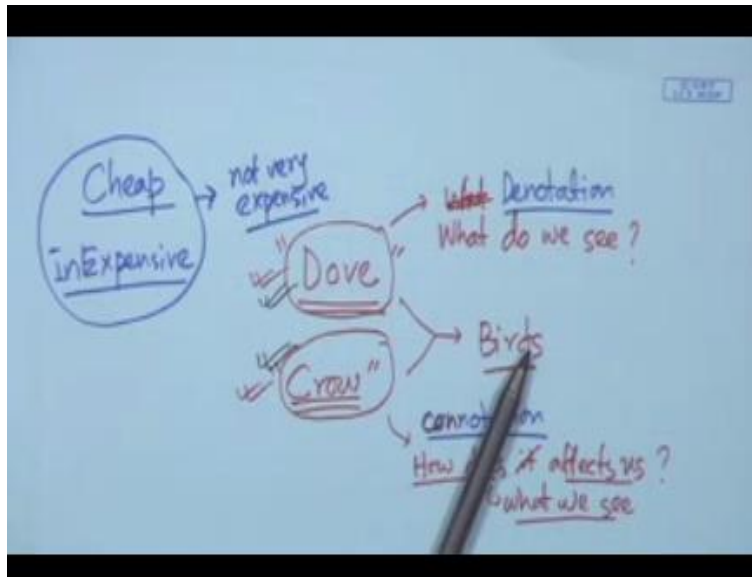
with that is how you know visual perception works in our case but now we are going deep dive we are deep diving into it and trying to understand how it place.

So one aspect is what we are seeing we try to understand that now coming to the other aspect what does connotation mean is connotation refers to the wide array of positive and negative association that most words naturally carry with them so we will come to this example so what connotation is taking about is each word carries with it some kind of association so that is based on barmaids you know how a word has been used over course of time by different people by different culture by you know different situations award.

And we see that the meaning of words changes also these associations have manier times change over a period of time what it is to mean earlier means very differently in today's concept so many of the linguistic studies happen in those areas where we look at the change of ward and its meaning and its connotation with the change of society and people but what is important over here is we are trying to draw an association in a positive fashion and in a negative fashion.

Many a times both can apply also in several aspects we will come to that example later so what essentially connotation does is a positive and a negative association with a particular ward which is associated so now we will look at two more words.

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Which is Cheap so many a times we use this word cheap and many a times we use the word in-expensive so now if you look at these two pa word both of them denotatively look at something which is you know which is not very expensive, so both of them carry this notion of something which i9s not very expensive you term as cheap so as soon as you see this word it is cheap you know I bought this pen and this is cheap, right.


So denotatively whether you are saying this pen is in-expensive or this pen is cheap denotation wise dictionary wise it will be something which is of lesser value or which does not costume mush something like that so it means that way but now look at the connotative aspect it has got with the word cheap means cheap has this connotation of something which is of lower category it has something derogated.

It has something negative associated with it though denotation wise in-expensive and cheap both mean the same but as soon as you use the words cheap you have a derogatory or a negative implication a negative connotation with that word whereas if you say this pen is in-expensive that does not bring in the connotative aspect which you relate within the word cheap so this is one example where we talk about.

Which has which clearly shows the difference between the denotation and connotation and this is equally prevalent when it comes to imagery when we are creating visual images it is same as having a word as cheap and in-expensive is a kind of treatment that you are doing with that image that will bring in the association of something negative or the same image but with the different treatment.

A different vocabulary can bring in the concept of something positive and something enthusiastic about it so different visual designer different artists use this particular methodology in their creation for creating different connotation, so we will see some of those examples later.

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Difference between Connotation and Denotation	
<b>Denotation</b> precise meaning	<b>Connotation</b> refers to range of associations
It is constant	It is variable.
Culture agnostic	Dependent on culture
Direct and unambiguous	Indirect and fuzzy, imaginative
No emotional implication	Dependent on emotional implication

So there are very prevalent difference between connotation and denotation so denotation is talking about the precise meaning whereas connotation refers to a range of association so whereas denotation is convergent it pinpoints to a particular aspect denote connotation is wider you know it caters to wide range of associations and you look at those association that is the primary difference that we have got.

Then we come to the denotation which is constant whereas connotation is variable so the dictionary wise linguistic meaning wise that is constant you know denotation would not change over course of time easily so if you are representing a particular object by a certain image or a sign the denotation of that would not change but the connotation is variable, so today if dove stand for peace.

And you know very calm animal it might change over period of time only to very a situations and so that larger sense of variability with that associated with connotation, denotation is culture agnostic that means it is not dependent on culture whereas connotation is heavily dependent on culture so denotation is something which its meaning cuts across culture it remains there as a culture so when we talk about an imaginary.

When you are drawing a dove when you are drawing a crow the vocabulary of that leads to be constant only then it will denote a dove or a crow so that is something very constant whereas and that is independent of the culture that you are talking about representation of a crow in some other culture, culture A will be same as a representation in culture B whereas that you can understand the connotation is purely dependent on culture.

So the connotation associated with a dove in culture A could be very different with the connotation associated with culture B, so now we look at the other differences so denotation is very direct and unambiguous whereas connotation is indirect fuzzy and imaginative, so denotation is very direct there is no scope of ambiguity in that the meaning remains constant across whereas in connotation as you can understand there is a scope of Fuzziness.

There is a scope of indirectness it could be mean positive it could be mean negative and the associations could be different and there is a scope of imagination of that particular individual also coming into picture so when you are looking at a dove your imagination your past experience your culture can lead you to a different connotation with dove from me so there comes this question of fuzziness.

And as visual designers you should have to balance some way or between this denotation and connotation so where you want to be direct you want to cut across the message very clearly you go by denotation but at the same time you will have to leave some scope of imagination creativity that brings with it a excitement so that part also has to be taken care off but not at the not compromising the meaning not compromising this generic message that you are trying to portrait.

And so last but not the least denotation does not have Any emotional implication whereas connotation has an emotional connectivity or implication this is very essential for us to understand denotation is dry it does not really require aspect where we are trying to look at the emotional aspect there is no rule for emotion whereas connotation brings with it a scope of emotion and that brings the excitement.

That glows you with your creation a creation is something that you are emotionally connected so you have to bring in this sense of connotation with it for making it more locus.

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**Different or same**

Connotation and denotation are not two separate things/signs. They are two aspects/ elements of a sign, and the connotative meanings of a word exist together with the denotative meanings.

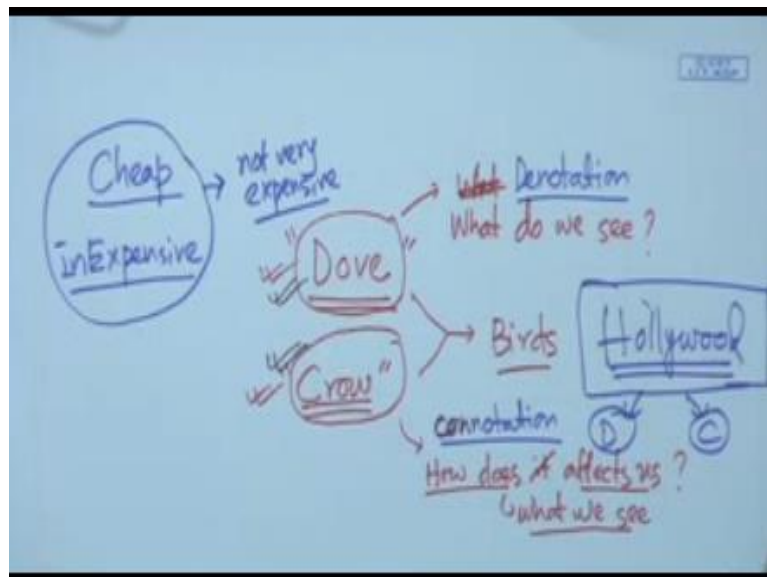
*Hollywood*

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So now we will look at our the two aspects connotation different or same so they are not two separate things though we saw lot of differences but we have to understand that they are not two separate things but they are two aspects or elements of a sign and a connotative meaning of a word exist together with the denotative meanings so now comes another twist in the story we saw the you know very prevalent differences between connotation and denotation.

But you have to understand one very important and interesting aspects also is that we are still looking at the same world we are still looking at the same image and both of these are acting together so the denotative method is acting and at the same time the connotative method is acting so they are sides of the same coin is not that you can keep aside denotation keep aside connotation it is not that as soon as you encounter with anything any sign you will encounter with these two methodology which is acting with your user with yourself in your mind this thing will keep on happening and a better designer approved designer will try to map these two things together we will try to play with the denotation and connotation.

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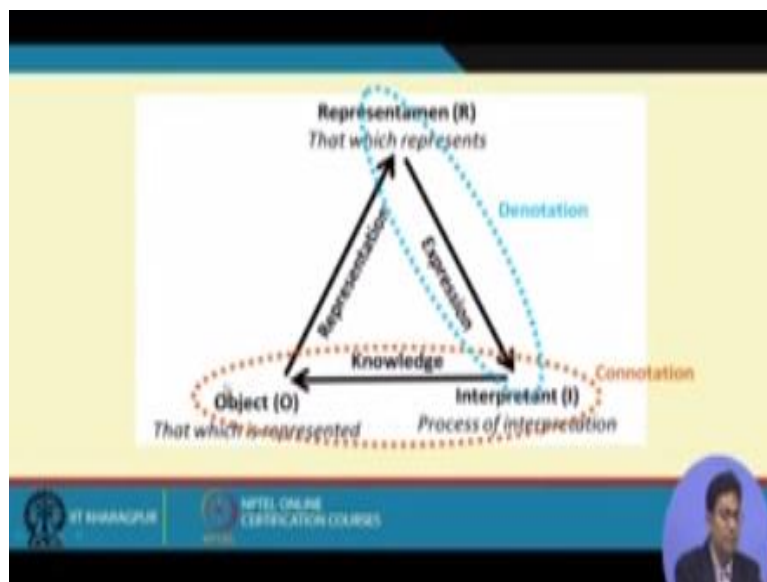


So say for example, if you take this word Hollywood okay, as soon as we talk about this particular word Hollywood see both denotation and connotation is acting simultaneously with

you so the denotation of the word with Hollywood is something it is place, it is a place where movies are made it is place where English and international movies are made and the connotation which immediately starts affecting with you it is something to do with star doom, glamour, you know show business things like that.

You know very lot of money and prosperity things like that is associated is the connotative association that you start putting with the particular word same thing I have happens when you look at an image so whatever I am trying to establish essentially over here is as soon as you encounter a sign both denotation and connotation start acting simultaneously.

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So let us see what it happens if you look at the semiotic model, so here we have talked about the object and the interpretation of the objects so this is where the connotation comes into picture because it is dependent on your knowledge and this knowledge is based on your past experiences and your encounter with that object. So here it comes the notation of connotation that is where it is happening in the semiotic landscape.



Whereas denotation is something where it is being represented by some particular fashion and you are looking at it is expression, so this is what is happening whether it is a sign visual or whatever other means you are looking at it is representation and making some very direct judgment so that is where the denotation comes into picture so in your design you should always keep this in mind, whereas the interprets association with the object is something that you have to study in order to understand the connotation.

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Some aspects of connotation and denotation

- Connotations can be both positive and negative;  
*Role*
- Connotative meaning can change denotative meaning over time  
*Home, House*
- Both denotation and connotation could be present  
*Fungus*

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So this is constantly acting and now we come into some of the aspects of connotation and denotation, connotation can both the positive and negative so if we take example of a rose so connotations is not that it is always positive always negative there is a range of association so a rose is associates something to do with love and romance so that is the connotation associated with it at the same time rose has an association of thorn and it has an association that of heart, shape, death, struggle, pain also associated with it.

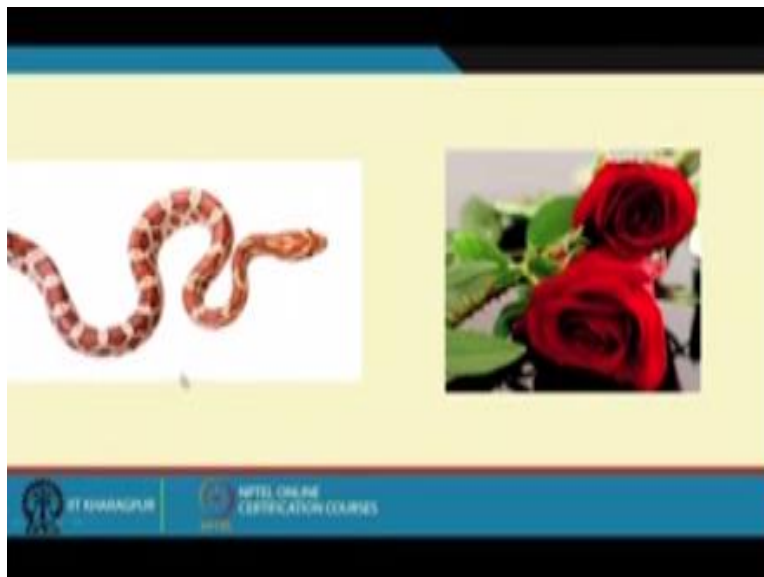
So the same connotation can have different association that is one aspect another aspects is connotations meaning can change denotative meaning over time, so very, very important thing for us to know that this aspect also exist that over a course of time how we are connotating that

changes the denotation say for example the word home and house, house and home both refer to a building a place where we live but over course of its usage the connotation that we have with a home or home is something which associates relationship which associates warmth is associates some personal connection.

So home starts having this kind of denotation so the meaning of home has changed from what a house means, whereas they both started with the same notion of our place to live but today with the usage with the connotative association's home means very differently from that of a house. So the denotation can be changed by connotation so that is also another aspect we should keep in mind and both denotation and connotation could be present we have talked about this in past so anything that we encounter.

So both denotation and connotation comes into picture. Let us take as the example of fungus, when we talk about fungus it means it is a growth it is a biological development it is a biological organism, but the connotation aspect to that is maybe it is not fresh it is something to do with disease, it is something not good so this connotation and denotation together builds a case.

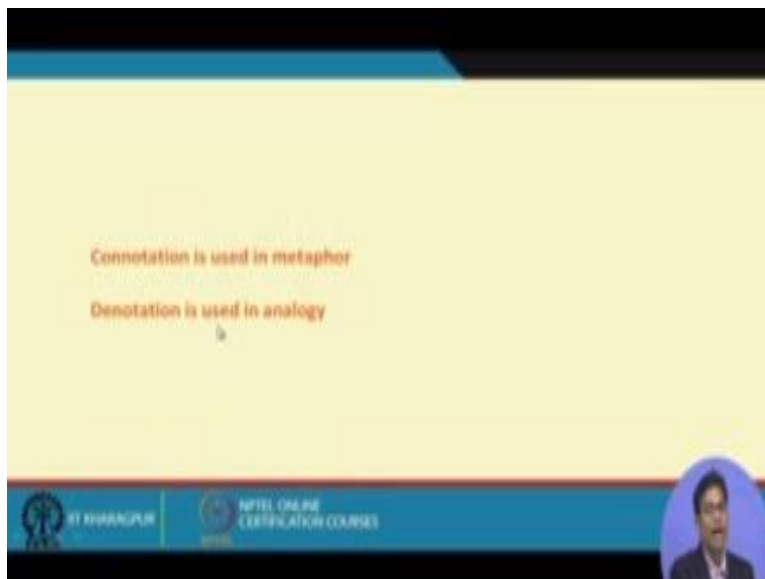
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So let us take some of the examples which we are talking about your case of snake so when you look at this image immediately so if the connotation and denotation is coming into picture by looking at it, it denotes a snake by its form by its syntax you make out that this is a snake or a flower so this is the denotative aspect that you are associating with the image. Whereas the connotations are very different a snake has something to do with that poison you know which is dangerous so you start associating with this thing.


The rose here I have intentionally put it with a thorn so see the kind of connotation that you are having based on your culture and your perception that will be very different from the denotation so denotation wise it is a rose there are leaves there are thorns but what is the connotation that you are associating with it.

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So connotation is used in metaphor this is something that you need to realize and denotation is used in analogy.

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Color	Positive Connotations	Negative Connotations
Red	active, inspiring, exciting, powerful, strong, energy, passion, warning	aggressive, angry
Blue	calmness, justice, maturity, intellect, reliability, trust, peace, loyalty, wisdom, order	aggressive, reserved and distant
Turquoise	relaxing	not defined, confused and dull
Green	growing, harmony, growth, used to nature, calm, green, security, organized	aggressive, reserved
Yellow	active, intelligence, happy, warmth, care, fun, light	confused, aggressive and
Orange	active, warm, joyful, fun, enthusiastic, care	aggressive, reserved, dull
Violet	active, rich, creative	all

So this is an example where how you associate positive and negative connotation with the colors so color red I will just show you one example you can look at it this slide later say for example red is associated with activeness, integrative, exciting, powerful, strong, strength all these things are associated as positive connotation with red whereas aggressive, alarming, danger all these are associative the negative connotation.

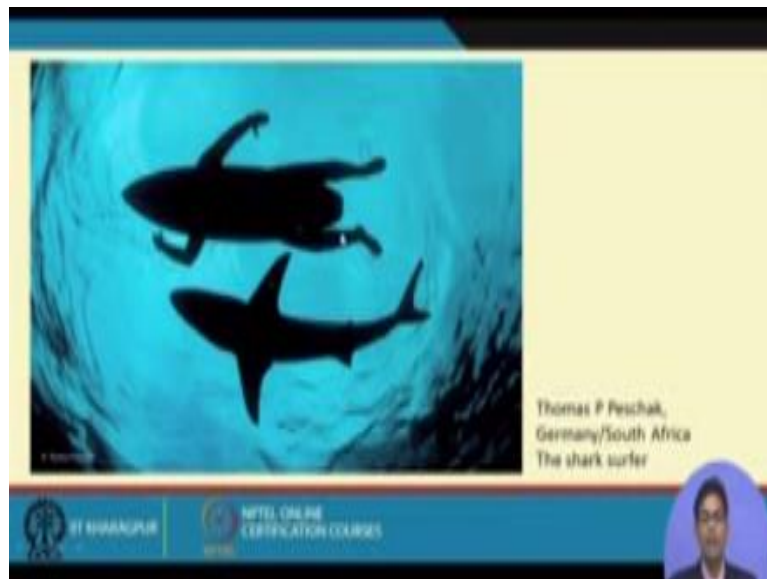
So the same color the same syntax the same visual representation but the connotation is varying depending on how you associate with the object.

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So let us look at some other images so this is a very famous photograph where you see some animals so denotation wise what you see is there are some animals which are sitting, but look at the connotation aspects which you have got it is quality on animals there are heart shapes, they are away from nature so all these connotation come into picture and that is how an image communicates see look at the image over here and the strong connotative aspect and denotative aspect which is the photographer has utilized to convey a message.

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Look at this another imager he were putting both these things together so we can see a shark and a person who is swimming and denotation wise it is nothing but it is nothing but it is two objects in water, but look at the connotation it is bringing in a whole lot of different associations if you look at this image I need not tell you what are the connotation association that you are having but you are bringing in lot of association that probably it is dangerous probably it is something to do with nature and man maybe it is something to do it friendship between these two creatures so there are different types of connotation.

But the important aspect as a designer you should realize is that both connotation and denotation play together and there is a whole scope of creativity associated with it, so that brings us to the end of this lecture, thank you.