



The importance of denotation and connotation

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Abstract: *The connotation of a word or term adds elements of emotion, attitude, or color. The meaning or use of denotation and connotation depends partly on the field of study. The research in this sphere is to result in a great contribution to the development of lexicography and the systematical studies of different languages. Incorporation of linguistic units with the meaning of national cultural component is offered to learn English and improve the writing style.*

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Language is symbolic in that we use it to represent ideas, objects, and feelings. Connotation and denotation, a part of language and communication, are two more tools in order to distinguish the meaning of an unfamiliar term. [1].

We can interpret any given statement in more than one way. Sometimes the difference is simply literal versus figurative interpretation. [2]. We better understand that words are not limited to one single meaning. Most of the words do not simply express a thought, but also express feelings beyond the word's literal meaning. Denotation and Connotation are two principal methods of describing the meanings of words.

Connotation refers to a meaning that is implied by a word apart from the thing which it describes explicitly. Words carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings, in addition to their literal meanings or denotations.

Words may have positive or negative connotations that depend upon the social, cultural, and personal experiences of individuals. For example, the words *childish*, *childlike* and *youthful* have the same denotative, but different connotative, meanings. *Childish* and *childlike* have a negative connotation, as they refer to immature behavior of a person. Whereas, *youthful* implies that a person is lively and energetic.

Below are a few connotation examples. Their suggested meanings are shaped by cultural and emotional associations:

- “He’s such a *dog*.” – In this sense, the word *dog* connotes shamelessness, or ugliness.
- “That woman is a *dove* at heart.” – Here, the *dove* implies peace or gentility.
- “There’s no place like *home*.” – While *home* may refer to the actual building someone lives in, connotatively, it most often refers to family, comfort, and security.

In literature, it is a common practice among writers to deviate from the literal meanings of words in order to create novel ideas. Figures of speech frequently employed by writers are examples of such deviations. [3].

Metaphors are words that connote meanings that go beyond their literal meanings. Shakespeare, in his *Sonnet 18*, says:

Shall I Compare Thee to a *Summer’s Day*...”

Here, the phrase “a *Summer’s Day*” implies the fairness of his beloved.



Connotation provides the basis for symbolic meanings of words because symbolic meanings of objects are different from their literal sense. Look at the following lines from Shakespeare's play *As you Like It*:

*"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts..."*

Here, *a stage* connotes the world; *players* suggests human beings; and *parts* implies different stages of their lives.

In literature, connotation paves way for creativity by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, symbolism, and personification. [4]. Had writers contented themselves with only the literal meanings, there would have been no way to compare abstract ideas to concrete concepts, in order to give readers a better understanding. Therefore, connotative meanings of words allow writers to add to their works dimensions that are broader, more vivid, and fresher.

In conclusion, learning language is not simply a matter of learning words. It is a matter of correctly relating our words to the things and happenings for which they stand. It is the need of knowing how meanings of words vary from one cultural context into another. By referring to connotation, we use language which is symbolic to represent ideas, objects, and feelings.

References

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