

# Design Pedagogy in Symbology: Denotative and Connotative Interpretation

Las Vegas, USA

This paper aims to demonstrate an empirical study of the design pedagogy in denotative and connotative symbol study. The study was implemented by the sophomore level of graphic design students and the instruction focused on design theories and methods for helping students to improve their design proficiency of visual literacy. This study was also to cultivate effective and productive learning outcomes from a pedagogical strategy in which students were able to expand critical thinking ability from the problem-solving process in the discussion with the interpreting and understanding visual language and communication.

**Keywords:** Symbol Study, Visual Literacy, Design Pedagogy, Design Methods

## Abstract

This study introduces a new perspective on the design pedagogy in learning symbol design. A new experimental discipline implemented by the design methods demonstrates positive learning outcomes for students on the development of symbol study. Understanding denotative and connotative interpretation in visual literacy is essential in order to convey not only a clear message but also distinctive recognition as the nature of symbol quality. Students executed design experiments with design theories and methods for understanding design fundamentals of the denotative symbol and explored a matrix table for cultivating connotative symbols. This pedagogical strategy applied to the expansion of visual concepts with progressive experiments on each stage; **1) analyzing perceptive characteristics, 2) simplifying visual construction, 3) developing a visual concept with connotative meaning, and 4) configuring visual balance and enhanced quality based on design principles.** With examples of student outcomes, this paper explains an analysis of functional expression and interpretation applied by design methods. This study discovered that earlier teaching of design fundamental disciplines with theories and methods in the graphic design major gave students better opportunities to pursue their further study more effectively and productively.

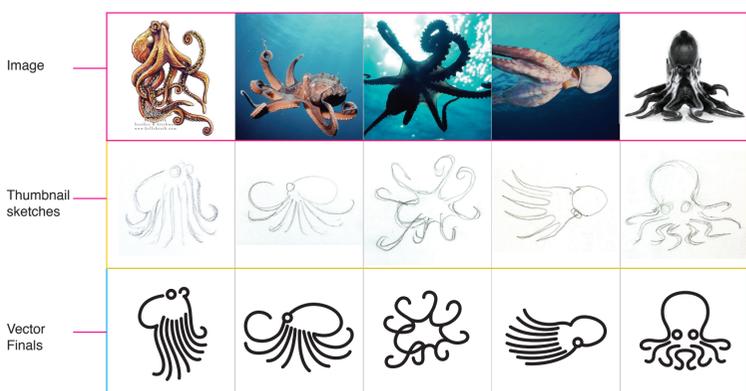
## Design Methods

According to the nature of the academic environment in liberal arts in which students' learning outcome requires both comprehensive visual literacy and proficiency of design ability, the discipline of the symbol study in the beginning level of graphic design major has focused on the design theories and methods instead of placing the subject matter on the practicum basis. The pedagogical strategy demonstrates how students approach the development of visual concepts with progressive experiments on each stage.

Stage	Learning Activity and Implementing Creativity
S1	Analyzing perceptive characteristics.
S2	Simplifying visual construction with denotative interpretation.
S3	Developing a visual concept with connotative interpretation.
S4	Configuring visual balance and enhanced quality based on design principles.

### Implementation for denotative interpretation

According to the discipline with understanding abstract form, the final denotative symbol set required to be clear with understanding the visual characteristics. Any judgement of debating between clarity and uniqueness for the symbol quality left for the final outcomes in which all symbols need to appear with both satisfactions and effectiveness in the connotative consequences.



### Implementation for connotative interpretation

In this experimentation, there were some considerations for developing visual balance between clarity and uniqueness. Students developed visual concepts for the connotative symbol with three design methods, however, visual experimentations with three attributes were not limited to explore more or less effectiveness of the visual balance between subjective perceptions and objective descriptions.

- 1) how much visual information can be controlled in a way two visual characteristics included or excluded?
- 2) what role or function of attributes do you perceive for connotation?
- 3) how do we utilize two visual structures equally adopted into another?

Design Method	Example of the solutions
M1) adopt an entire construction of the attribute as a characteristic	
M2) describe additional attribute characteristic into the subject	
M3) discovering a new form based on equal combination between two entities	

## Learning Outcomes

The discipline focused on visual construction of symbolic fundamentals with black (positive) and white (Negative). In implemented design methods for symbol study instead of intuitive thinking and decisions, students excelled creative performance successfully beyond visual aesthetic concerns.

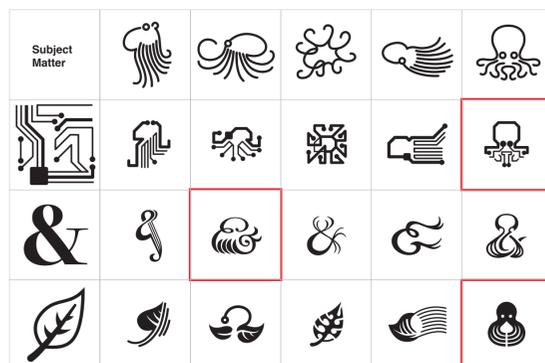
### Learning outcome 1:

Adopting visual characteristic from the other attribute could identify unique visualization to be associated with inherent characteristic and visual metaphor.



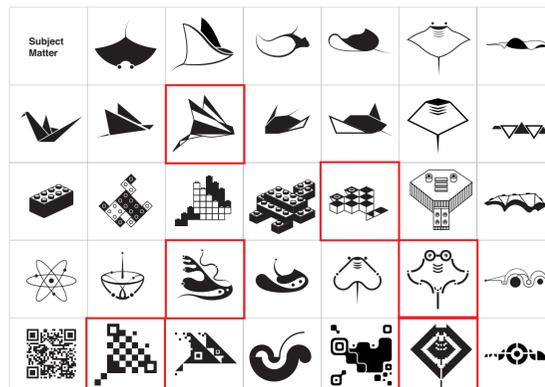
### Learning outcome 2:

An effective adjustment of line thickness generates a visual dynamic while the line was examined with different gesture based on the attribute.



### Learning outcome 3:

Applying attributes into breaking and manipulating a subject entity with remaining denotative meaning would be the best way for finding a connotative symbol.

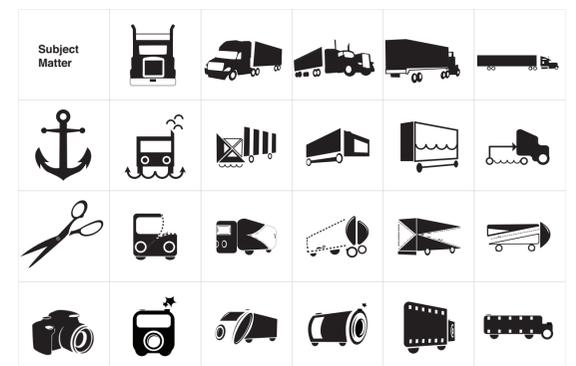


### Learning outcome 4:

With the comprehension of design methods in the matrix table for connotative symbol set, students became more confident to expand their critical thinking ability and to approach an effective decision making process to arrive at the best option as how to use an attribute for connotative interpretation.



\* Initial experimentation with a matrix table (Before)



\* Experiment with full comprehension of the design method (After)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this pedagogical symbol study implemented into design method discipline brought an effective learning outcome in sophomore level of graphic design major. Students, moreover, will face with many subject matters in design creativity through upper divisions and professional fields. This design method will help them to reach the goal of successful outcomes with any type of symbol design within limited schedule and time consumption. While there was a limitation with measuring the effectiveness of disciplines compared with other practical exercises for the symbol design, we believe that students will execute their creativity more productively and professionally. This study definitely distinguished vocational discipline of practical exercises and students perceived the academic importance with research and methods through all the design study and activity as a team.



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