

Episode 2: Denotations and Connotations

Welcome to Popular Culture and Theory, joining you from the unceded lands of the Palawa people in what we now call Hobart. I'm your host, Ashley Remminga. So we're going to continue on from last week in unpacking semiotics.

And let's just begin by recapping where we left off. So we were looking at an Eevee Pokemon card. In the top right hand corner is a multi-point star image. We're going to unpack what a sign is. So a sign is the basic unit of communication, which is broken up into two sections, the signifier and signified. The signifier is the physical form of the sign. So in this case, it's the symbol of the star, the gray circle with the black multi-pointed star inside it. The signified is the meaning of that sign.

So that is that this here, this particular signifier means normal type Pokemon. This week, we're going to unpack the meaning of things and introduce two new key terms, denotations and connotations. So let's begin by defining these two terms. What is a denotation and what is a connotation? A denotation is the basic conceptual meaning of things. A connotation is the more complex and abstract interpretation of things, perhaps driven by emotional or cultural backgrounds. In other words, the simplistic meaning and the more complex meaning. These meanings may coexist together. Often they do coexist together. Sometimes it might be contradictory. Sometimes it might be unrelated.

Sometimes they may share very similar meanings. So let's go back to that symbol in the corner of the Eevee Pokemon card. The denotation of the symbol would be the attribute of the card.

In this case, normal type Pokemon. It is the surface level understanding of what this particular symbol means. If we're to look at what the connotation of this symbol may mean, we may say it suggests that the player with this particular card may play or collect normal type Pokemon. Perhaps if you're perhaps playing this game and you have this card, maybe it suggests you have a meta deck or maybe an unconventional deck. Perhaps you could pair it with the context of the Eevee itself and understand a sense of possibility of Pokemon evolutionary lines.

As we see with this example, these two elements can exist simultaneously and they work together to form various meanings of this particular sign. So we're going to leave it there for this week and hopefully you've learned something. If you have, please like and share this with maybe your friends. Maybe they can also learn something. And if you have any questions, concerns or comments, please let me know.

I would love to hear your comments. So thank you again and I will see you next week.