

Motionary: A Dictionary of Meaning in Motion

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1 Introduction

Expression of *meaning* in motion graphics can be accomplished through the understanding of metaphors used in everyday language. This paper is a report of an instructional design strategy used to apply Lakoff & Johnson's theoretical approach to metaphors of the everyday, in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, to the development of metaphors for motion graphics based on typographically-enhanced message design. For example, Lakoff argues that OBLIGATIONS (*concept*) are POSSESSIONS, and we may add, are HEAVY (*meta-concepts*). Metaphorical concepts like these were used to start the design process.

2 Process and Outcome

Students were asked to choose a word and research potential metaphorical associations based on expressions found in everyday language. In a second phase of the activity, students were asked to visually convey the meaning of the word through motion graphics and typographic manipulation by applying concepts found during the research phase.

Nearly 100 short animations were compiled and turned into a website entitled Motionary**, a dictionary in motion (Figure 1). Metaphorical animations were created by visual communications design students in the spring of 2002 and fall of 2003. As a part of the ongoing aspect of Motionary, students will be contributing new animations in semesters to come. An analysis of the works displayed in Motionary points out that students developed their own visual strategies which varied from explicit to implicit-abstract [Bendito and Reese 2004]. Because of its vernacular basis, this exercise gives a glimpse of how ordinary, everyday experiences can enrich a theoretical approach to motion graphic design education, and consequently its practice.

The following words have been illustrated with metaphorical concepts grounded on linguistic theory: active, alcohol, anger, annoyance, attraction, change, communication, competition, creation, .COM, darkness, dead, depression, design, desire, economy, effect, ego, emotion, fact, fear, frustration, harm, hope, idea, ignorance, illness, image, intimacy, intoxication, jealousy, joke, knowledge, laughter, life, love, lust, marriage, memories, mental health, money, morality, obedience, paranoid, past, pride, problem, quack, revelation, success, sex, society, team, theory, time, words, and young.

3 Conclusion

The generative promise of this work relies on its theoretical framework. Metaphors are generally perceived as the manifestation of concepts and ideas with subjective, poetic basis.

By providing a methodology that fosters creative visual interpretation of systematic thinking (metaphors we live by), this work is not only a contribution to design methodology, but it is also another evidence of the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to graphic design education.

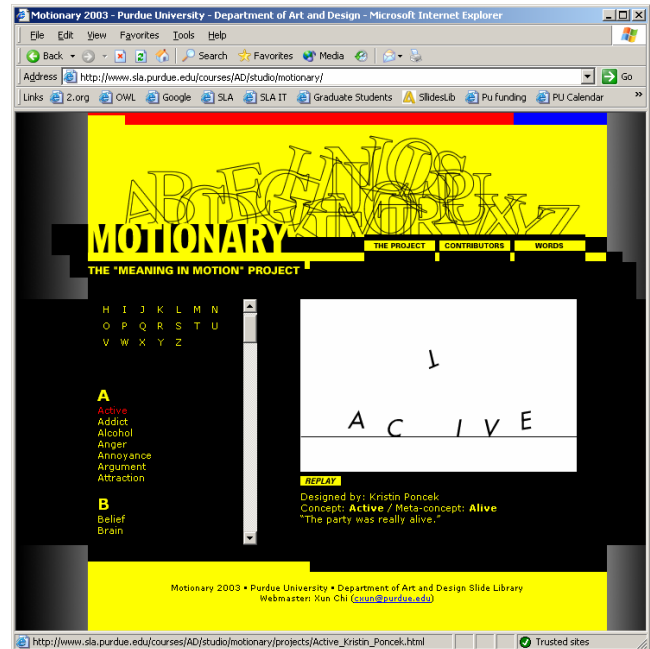


Figure 1: Screen capture of Motionary. Still image (active) from word animation by Kristin Poncek. Reprinted with permission.

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References

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** <http://www.sla.purdue.edu/courses/ad/studio/motionary>