

Two Sides to Every Story: Exploring memory-based perspectives in audio-visual storytelling

I have always been astonished by the selectivity of memory and the reinterpretation of history as a pattern existing on both personal and cultural levels. When we tell our stories and attempt to understand others', we must become aware that our narrative is a human construction, full of faults and misinterpretations due to our mind's selectivity and our limited insight into others' pasts. Our inability to see the full picture creates different perspectives and opinions of the same events and leads to most conflicts in our society.

In this research, I want to examine how the audio-visual presentation of an event can change the conclusion we draw from it, with explicit attention on characters' memories of the event. The research question would thus be 'How does the audio-visual presentation of subjective memories influence the audience's interpretation of the story?' My project is thus linked to the University's research theme of Creativity as it explores the writing methods, stylistic and other creative techniques in filmic storytelling that can be used to provide insight into characters' pasts, and the effects of the revelations of their memories on the audience's emotional response to the story. This is important as understanding how perspectives are created based on variant memories can help resolve misunderstandings and reduce conflicts.

In the first 2-3 weeks of the research, I will look deeply into selected film texts and other scholars' work on the topic. With the acquired knowledge, I will reach out to interview industry professionals to explore their practical approaches. I believe the possible interpretation of a story is influenced at all levels of the production; therefore, I wish to examine the tools used by scriptwriters, directors, cinematographers and editors to achieve their desired results.

Based on the data collected in the first part of the research, I will create two short films featuring the same event narrated by different characters with focus on their subjective memories, in order to illustrate the way perspectives are created. I will present the films to a test audience, along with a questionnaire on their thoughts and emotions about the presented stories, including questions about their preferred ending and the scenes and stylistic decisions that influenced them the most. The results should show how key elements of one's life can change our understanding of a situation.

Extending this project, I also propose following up with the creation of two short films/videos during the Leadership in Action project over the second summer, where I'd take on a leadership expedition. If provided the opportunity, I would have both the locals and the volunteers record footage during our stay. I would then work with the two groups separately to edit the footage to express their experience of the time spent together. As a result, the whole program would be captured from two different viewpoints, that of the locals and that of the volunteers, which, according to my theory, will paint a different picture of the most important aspects of the experience for the two groups.