CAN YOU FEEL IT ?

Emotion in Film and Audio Description

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Background

- "… one of the major incentives for watching feature films is the emotional experience they offer" (Tan, 1996, p. 41)

- "… the movie theater occupies a central place, as one of the predominant spaces where societies gather to express and experience feelings" (Plantinga & Smith, 1999, p. 1)

Background

- "…an assistive service … whose main objective is to compensate for the lack of perception of the visual component in any audiovisual message … in such a way that the visually impaired perceive the message as a harmonious work <u>which is as similar as possible to that which is perceived by the sighted</u>." (AENOR, 2005, p. 4)

- "…a service that makes audiovisual products <u>accessible and enjoyable for the blind and visually impaired</u> by transferring images and unclear sounds into a verbal…" (Reviers & Vercauteren, 2013)

Approach

Based on the basic principle underlying the guidelines/strategies created by the ADLAB-project:

Problems

-   Emotions only marginally present in AD research;

-   "… the nature of … filmic emotions is one of the least-explored topics in film studies" (Plantinga & Smith, 1999, p. 1)

-   Thinking and emotions are often considered opposites

-   "how can… rational processes hope to explain the <u>irrational world</u> of filmic Emotion?" (Smith, 1999, 103)

Possible Solution

<u>Cognitive research</u>

$\Rightarrow$ Central claim = emotions are *structured states* that very often *work together with cognitions*

<u>2 consequences</u>

- They can be studied and analysed in a structured way;
- They can be artificially generated

Emotions in Real Life

How does the cognitive dimension of emotions work?

$\Rightarrow$ 3 stage process

- Cognitive process is <u>triggered</u> by an appropriate object

- Activates a <u>feedback mechanism</u>

- The emotion <u>disappears</u> if no more feedback is received

Check for confirmatory stimuli

Perpetuate the emotion
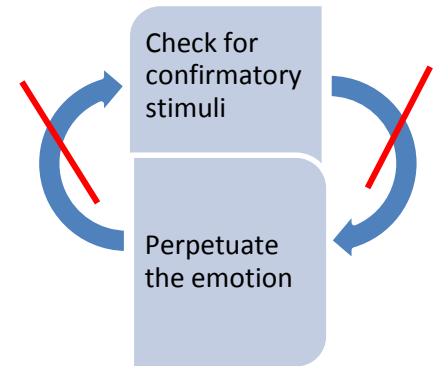
Emotions in Film

How can filmmakers activate this cognitive process?

(adapted from Carroll, 1999, pp. 21-47)

- Emotive pre-filtering (= removal of 'noise')

- Criterial pre-focus (= foregrounding of appropriate object)

Emotions in Film (2)

How can filmmakers reasonably assure the audience experiences the "right" emotion?

$\Rightarrow$ <u>Pro attitudes</u> that shape certain preferences in the audience

$\Rightarrow$ When confirmed $\rightarrow$ euphoric emotion

$\Rightarrow$ When flaunted $\rightarrow$ dysphoric emotion

Emotions in Film (3)

How can filmmakers keep the emotive process active throughout the film?

- One <u>predominant emotion</u> that "colours" the entire film

- "<u>orienting stimuli</u>" that guide the audience to the appropriate object and activate the cognitive feedback mechanism (= criterial pre-focus)

- Low-level <u>moods</u> ↔ high-intensity <u>emotions</u>

- Emotion markers
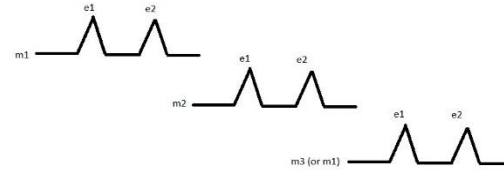   - Narratively relevant
    - Purely emotive

Emotion in AD

Determine the colouring emotion →

Can it be derived from the genre?
YES → Confirmed by orienting stimuli
NO → Determine on the basis of the orienting stimuli

Determine the mood-emotion sequence →

Determine the emotional informativeness →

Determine the amount of markers
Determine the type of markers

Determine the function of the markers →

Narratively relevant?
Purely emotive?

A First Example

In Time (Niccol, 2011)

Storyline:

In a future where people stop aging at 25, but are engineered to live only one more year, having the means to buy your way out of the situation is a shot at immortal youth. Here, Will Salas finds himself accused of murder and on the run with a hostage - a connection that becomes an important part of the way against the system. (IMDB)

Colouring Emotion:

Suspense

- Future-oriented emotion;
- Desired outcome not probable;
- Moral concerns

A First Example

A First Example

Colouring Emotion of the scene: Suspense

Will's mother is confronted with a price raise on her birthday, the moment she is heading back home from work to celebrate when she wants to take the bus: she has 1h30 minutes left on her arm, but instead of 1 hour, the bus ride now costs 2 hours so she is forced to walk/run.

Mood-Emotion Sequence: Preparation for a more intense emotional moment

Emotion Markers:

- *Sound-effects and Music*

- *Dialogue & Characters' voices*

- *Visual*

Narratively Relevant

Redundant

Concluding Remarks

Basic insights in the cognitive workings of emotions in real life and in film can help describers to **analyse** their source text and **determine** its emotive dimension.

BUT this is just an exploratory introduction and many questions remain:

- How can this approach be integrated in other approaches for analysis and content selection in AD?

- How can emotions be elicited in AD? (word choice, voicing,…)

- How can an emotional immersion of the target audience best be achieved?

- …

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