

## Panel C1

Auditorium

### Education and Animation III

Zeynep Akçay

#### **Animating for a Preschool Interactive Film: A Case Study of How the Modular Logic of Interactivity Affects the Character Animation and Other Factors of Narrative Immersion**



One of the central endeavors of the interactive drama is the narrative immersion of the spectator/users in the story while keeping it modifiable by the user: Ryan, after naming four aesthetic values of interactive narratives (namely, natural interface, integration of user action within the story, frequent interaction and the dynamic creation of the story) in order to "bring interactive narrative as close as possible to life", stress that the main occupation of an interactive narrative should be the ability to create narrative immersion, which means "an engagement of the imagination in the mental construction and contemplation of a story world." For Ryan, In contrast with ludic immersion, which is "a deep absorption in the performance of a task, comparable to the intensity with which a violinist performs a concerto", narrative immersion contains the emotional, temporal or spatial desires and reactions linked to the story and to the characters. (Ryan, 2008)

However, the very possibilities of interactivity, which fragmentize the narrative in many levels and give the spectator/users access to modify its components in various degrees renders such a narrative immersion rather problematic, for, the narrative coherence and the aesthetic value of a film is usually dependent on its uninterrupted experience.

This paper summarizes the production and the reception phases of an interactive animated film for preschool children called Bo & Di. By analyzing how the modular logic of interactivity affected the narrative design and the aesthetic structure of this film, especially at the level of character animation, I hope to exhibit the aesthetic values attributed to interactive narratives by underlining their differences from those attributed to linear animated films, and demonstrate the challenges for creating an immersive narrative experience while retaining an acceptable level of interactivity. Furthermore, I want to expand the question of narrative immersion by discussing the findings of a large-scale reception study that I am still conducting --which is to be concluded by February 2017-- among preschoolers: what other factors can be accounted for in a discussion about the narrative immersion of an interactive animated film? What happens when children experience a modular narrative? How are they attached to the characters while interacting with them? What is the importance of the aesthetic coherence of animation in such a context?

Bo & Di is an interactive animated film that I finalized in December 2016 as part of my Practice Based PhD degree in Arts and Design Program. This film and its linear version are specifically tailored to measure the differences in the emotional immersion levels of children. Departing from developmental psychology's "Theory of Mind" notion, I have worked with scholar E. Durgel Jagtap to develop a storyline that is suitable for opening a dialog about the emotional responses of the characters who feel different things and react in different ways to various situations. A reception test was designed in order to measure the differences in the children's immersion and in their understanding of emotional states

of the characters, investigating whether children experiencing the interactive version would have a better grasp of the characters' motivations and feelings compared to children watching its linear version. For this test, about 200 children are being observed for determining their level of immersion while watching the interactive and linear versions, and afterwards, they are directed same questions relating to the emotional states of the characters. Although the receptions tests are still going on and the children's grasp of emotional states of the characters remain to be statistically analyzed, the preliminary observations about their experience indicate that, children who interact with the film are much more "immersed" in the experience than their counterparts watching the linear version.

This might be interpreted in several ways, inviting discussions about the relationship between the aesthetic coherence and the modular structure of interactive animated films as well as questions about if ludic immersion, which means the completion of interactive tasks can lead to a certain emotional -- therefore, narrative -- immersion, no matter how fragmented and the interactive experience can be.

## **Biography**

Lecturer in Animation Department at Yasar University, İzmir, Turkey  
[zeynep.akcay@yasar.edu.tr](mailto:zeynep.akcay@yasar.edu.tr)

Zeynep Akçay is a scholar and animated filmmaker experimenting in various fields of audio-visual narratives. She was born in Turkey and studied Communication in Istanbul before moving to Canada to get a BFA degree in Animation at Concordia University. She continued her studies in Master of Arts in Film Studies, for which she did a thesis about the narrative strategies in animated films. She also worked in several commercial projects, including two TV Shows and one stop motion film. Upon her return to Turkey, she worked in production companies and continued teaching animation as part time lecturer until her appointment as full time lecturer at Yaşar University in İzmir. She is currently working as lecturer in Animation Department and finalizing her Practice Based PhD at the same university.