

# **Play, Agency and Interactive Narrative**

## **Technological University Dublin**

**Introduction to Digital Media**

**Assessment 1: Report**

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**Link to artefact: <https://youtu.be/Byr4MCWZUXs>**

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## **Group Assignment report: Play, Agency and Interactive Narrative**

### **Introduction**

#### **Project Aims:**

The Aim of this project was to inform other members of our class the meaning of play, agency and interactive narrative. We tried to achieve this by creating an informative video. It had to have a minimum run time of 4 minutes and a maximum of 6 minutes.

#### **Scope of the Project:**

In our video we will be covering certain aspects of play, agency and interactive narrative. We believe that these aspects are important to inform the viewer and to allow them to understand the meaning of this topic.

#### **Project Requirements:**

For this project we were given a brief that had to meet certain criteria. That being that we had to create a YouTube video with closed captions which also had to be copyright compliant, or we had to create a podcast accompanied with an audio transcript. Projects had to be accompanied with this report. As a group we decided to create the YouTube video.

The requirements for the YouTube video were to create a video with a run time of minimum of 4 minutes and the max run time of 6 mins which

The report had to have the word count of 1500 and include the headings of

- Introduction
- Research Process
- Production Process
- Hardware and software used
- File formats and compression
- Copyright Compliance

This report had also to include Harvard referencing form any of the information we gathered or images and videos we sourced.

#### **Typical Users:**

The typical users for this video will be our classmates in the introduction to digital media class. Also, the video will be unlisted on one of the group members YouTube channel which means that only people who have the link can view the video.

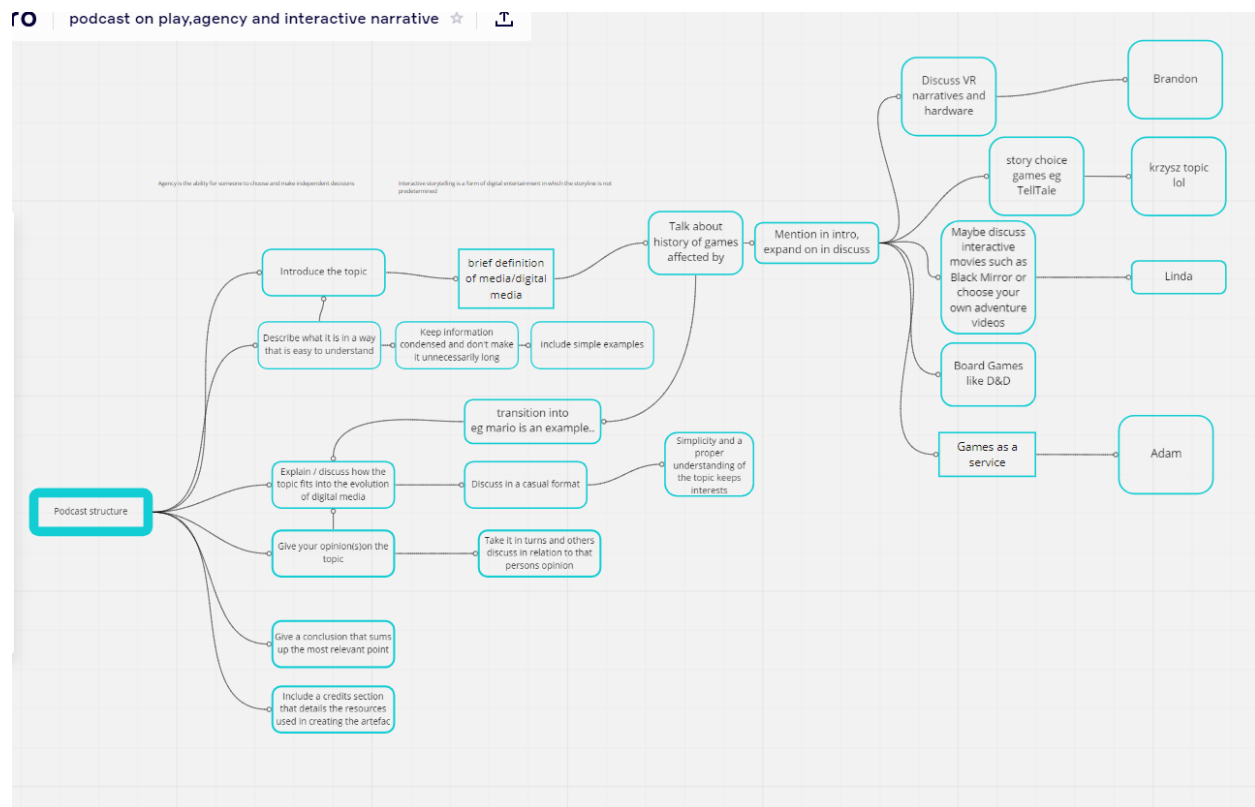
## Research process

As a group we discussed about how we were going to divide our main topic choice into smaller categories and from that we researched direct topics that we were making our videos on, gaining some information from our research, pre-production.

### Research Method:

For this we firstly created a Miro Board to share our ideas on what we could break the main title of our work down into. We also discussed using the Miro board what we will talk about in the video.

Once we were happy with our Miro Board, we then selected which smaller topics each of us could focus on.



*Screenshot from our Miro Board*

**Individual research: 1**

For his research process, **Krzysztof** looked for games that had the type of agency that he was describing and included them in his script. The different types of agencies were just observations made while playing the games. He later found academic papers that confirmed his observations, which are written in the reference part.

**Individual research: 2**

During his research, **Brandon** compared and looked through VR games that best fit his script and would work well for his points on interactive narrative and agency. The many interactive narrative pieces found while searching were numerous and provided a great deal of examples.

**Individual research: 3**

When researching 'Interactive Movies' **Linda** had common knowledge about these types of films, she watched the movie, "Bandersnatch" that she also discusses in the video piece. She also found articles the producer's opinions on how they thought the movie turned out.

**Individual research: 4**

During **Adams** research of microtransactions He decided to investigate the first examples of downloadable content in the gaming industry. That being the horse armor DLC that was in the Elder Scrolls Oblivion. He also researched how much money certain companies are making from these microtransactions and the many different forms they take. For example, in the script **Adam** stated the amount of money Fortnite and Apex Legends made from their form of microtransactions.

**Division of tasks:**

Every week during our labs each member of the group would be in a call and we would discuss what work needed to be done before the call the following week. While discussing this we tried to spread the work out evenly and effectively so one person was doing a large amount of work and the others doing nothing.

## **Production process**

### **Pre-Production:**

For pre-production we each took our aspect relating to the topic and began to research the topic online. We also spoke and discussed aspects of the project in our teams call. These aspects being, what order each section will be played in, what time length would be suitable for each section and what software we be suitable to edit the video.

### **Production:**

**Krzysztof** recorded himself playing over the game he mentions in his script so that he could put it as video over the audio recording, so that the viewer will have something interesting to look at while listening to the audio. On screen visuals like text were also added to further help illustrate the points mentioned in the audio, and to add more visual stimuli to the video. Audio mastering in this section only consisted of making the audio fit within the 1-minute limit and some general level mixing.

**Brandon** gathered videos of gameplay, that he found on YouTube, for the various games he mentioned in his script, so it could provide interesting visuals and help display his points while he speaks. The editing involved cutting up the videos and mixing them together to have constant visual pieces and audio editing so that he could be heard over the games. He provided a voice-over for the introduction, edited the individual pieces together and uploaded the video to YouTube.

**Linda** firstly imported her recording to Premier Pro and from that she then added videos & images that suited areas in her video piece. She wanted to make sure not to have just images as she wanted to keep theme with smaller category choice 'Interactive Movies'. Then clipped the images/videos to fit the audio perfectly. For the conclusion Krzysztof sent her the audio recording and then she imported that onto Premier Pro and went through the same steps of snipping the audio and adding visuals.



*Screenshot from Premier Pro.*

**Adam** First gathered all his stock photos and videos that he used for his section on microtransactions and for editing the introduction to the video. Once that was done, he organized them in folders to find them easier in both premier pro and on the desktop. He then dragged and placed the suitable audio, stock videos and images onto the timeline in premier pro. With the audio tracks he snipped and cut pauses in the audio to make the flow of the audio smoother. Once all the images were placed in the correct order on the timeline, he then added transitions to the clips and images. So, they would just cut to the next piece. He did this by going over to the effects tab.

### **Postproduction:**

Once each member recorded their audio, they got to work on editing their part of their video. When they were satisfied with their video, they sent their part to **Brandon** who then edited all the videos together and uploaded it to YouTube as an unlisted video. In the meanwhile, our team got to work on writing up the report. After the video was uploaded and automatic subtitles were generated, **Brandon** edited the subtitles so that they would match our scripts.

**Hardware and Software used:**

Microsoft Word, Premiere Pro, Miro board and Voice Recorder was the software used for the creation of this project. Miro Board was used in the pre-production stage to brainstorm for the project it allowed us to create spider diagrams and mind maps in this program. Word was used to write the scripts for the video and a space for us to keep all our references for our sources of information. We used Premiere Pro to edit the video together importing images and videos into the program. We then uploaded the video we created to YouTube as the video sharing platform. Lastly, we used Word again to write up the report.

**File formats and compression information:**

For the audio files for our video, they were recorded using voice recorder on windows. Once the recording was finished, we saved the audio recording in the mp3 format, due to it being the most reliable and commonly used format for audio. The video was exported from Premier pro in the H.264 which is the mp4 file format.

**Copyright compliance:**

To ensure we were copyright compliant, we got our images/photos (apart from personal gameplay footage) from multiple websites that had free images and stock videos.

**Linda** used <https://pixabay.com> and <https://www.videezy.com> for free images & videos for her topic and for the conclusion.

**Krzysztof's** section is 100% copyright compliant as bar the usage of the creative column's song, images taken from the Steam Store pages of the games featured and the games played as an example, it consists of original work.

**Brandon** used various videos from YouTube from Oculus, for visuals of people using VR headsets, BlockHead Gaming for Half-Life: Alyx gameplay, UplIsNotJump for Skyrim VR gameplay, and The Destati for Skyrim dialogue footage.

**Adam** used various websites that were given to us from our lecturer which contained copyright free images and videos, these websites were <https://vle-bn.tudublin.ie/mod/url/view.php?id=293494> and <https://vle-bn.tudublin.ie/mod/url/view.php?id=293497>, <https://vle-bn.tudublin.ie/mod/url/view.php?id=293503> .

Adam also used the YouTube audio library that contains copyright free music to be placed in the background of the video.



## **References:**

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Dictionary.com, LLC, 2020. Definition of Agency. **(Introduction script)**

Richard Walsh, 2011. *Emergent Narrative in Interactive Media*. The Ohio State University Press **(Introduction script)**

Kate Walker, 2020. *Choose Your Own Adventure the Age of Interactive Films*. Raindance. **(Linda's script)**

Karen & Theresa J Tanenbaum, 2009. *Commitment to Meaning: A Reframing of Agency in Games*, Simon Fraser University **(Krzysztof's script)**

Akhilesh Ganti, 2020. How Does Fortnite Make Money? Investopedia **{Adams script}**

Adam Newell, 2019. How much money has Apex Legends made? Dot Esports **(Adams script)**

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix A**

Video link: <https://youtu.be/Byr4MCWZUXs>

### **Appendix B: Video Script**

#### **Introduction:**

Play, agency and interactive narrative have been a huge part of video games and media since the mid-1970's. Most, if not, all digital media contains at least one of these core concepts be it in movies or video games. Play refers to the act of interacting with something in an enjoyable way. Agency refers to having the option of making meaningful choices, and interactive narrative is a story that can be interacted with and have its outcome changed by the players choices. In this video we will be talking about how they appear in movies, games, VR and microtransactions and what effect they have.

#### **Linda's Script:**

In recent years, the consumer demand for tv shows and films have risen dramatically as we are in the middle of a digital revolution. So, from that, we have been introduced to interactive movies. We as the audience are almost creating the storyline in these movies.

This is done by giving the viewer the option of selecting what happens after certain scenes. So, the movie will then go down one path or the other, and later in the film you will be faced with a choice once again until you have reached the end of the movie. Giving you the final scene of the decisions you, as a viewer has made.

Netflix released an interactive movie called “Bandersnatch” It quickly became extremely popular. People were intrigued by this new way of watching a movie, as it combined a film and a video game idea into one. We as the audience could build our own path.

There is a lot that goes into creating these types of movies, they would have had to shoot up to 4 or more different scenes for each answer, so it would match up to each outcome of them answers.

Annabel Jones (executive producer of Bandersnatch) said “If we’d have known how difficult it was going to be,” “we might not have done it.”

### **Krzysztof’s Script**

There are different types of agency in the medium of video games. I am going to call these Gameplay agency, narrative agency, and no agency.

Gameplay agency can be described as, you know, gameplay. Examples of this can be found in open world games. For example, in Far Cry 3 you have enemy bases you can tackle in many ways, and you can decide how you do it. The game gives you a sort of sandbox and the toys to play with it. However, these choices don’t ultimately change how the story is played out.

In contrast, narrative agency refers to the actions you can take to affect the story being told in the game. An example of this is the Stanley parable. You decide how the story will play out. You can get different game endings because of the choices you made. The game itself also acknowledges this and makes the game even more meta.

The last example of agency in games is no agency. This one is the rarest out of the 3. It consists of giving the player no way of effecting the game. It can be compared to watching a movie, but you move the camera. Walking simulators, as they’re called, like The Beginner’s Guide are examples of such agency in action. Nothing you do affects anything.

### **Brandon’s script**

When it comes to VR, play, agency and interactive narrative take up a huge role. VR aims to make the players feel as if they are a part of the world. Games such as Half-Life: Alyx allows the player to interact with the world in unique ways such as destroying objects in the environment like bottles, adding to realism and showing that the player’s choice to destroy it has a result. Other games such as Skyrim, let’s the players build their own character, with their own strengths, weaknesses, abilities and personality, and all from a first-person perspective, help improve upon the interactive narrative and the immersion, accompanied along with the ability to choose different dialogue choices and actions, give that feel of agency, allowing the players to feel as if they actually have some form of impact on the world within the game.

### **Adams Script**

Micro transactions have become a common element in nearly all forms of games. From mobile games like clash of clans to triple A titles like FIFA and call of duty. These microtransactions can come in many forms and the style and genre of the game has also to be considered.

In this section I will cover different forms of microtransactions in games as a whole and how the style and narrative would affect these microtransactions.

One form of these microtransactions is story or add on dlc, dlc stands for downloadable content. These include additional story content which is mainly featured in single player games. They can add on to the initial story or portray a different narrative completely. Possibly sending the main character to a different location with new characters and plots.

In multiplayer focused games the developers have also included dlc to their titles. This is mainly in first person shooters. Developers will include the option for players to buy a season pass or dlc packs that come out during the game's life cycle. These would usually include additional maps, guns or other in game items to aid or benefit the player.

In the past 5 or so years most online, multiplayer focused games have moved to an in-game currency business model. This is the games form of money that can be purchased with real life money. This in game currency usually grants players with additional content such as skins for their character or weapons.

Examples of this would be battle royal games like apex legends or Fortnite. This would be done by offering players with a battle pass system which will grant them additional content. The battle pass system would include 100 tiers which can be earned by just playing the game or completing challenges.

With this business model Apex legends made over 90 million dollars from its in-game currency in the first month of its release. While last year Fortnite made 1.8 billion in its in-game purchases. And both games do not have a strong narrative to them.

### **Conclusion Script:**

In conclusion, play agency and interactive narrative does play a major role in today's digital landscape.

Here are the opinions of our team on the topics covered.

I think interactive movies really gave the viewers a whole new way of watching a movie and in the future, I think it is going to get even more popular as the technology will be even more advanced to design and create these types of films. – **Linda**

I would like to personally believe that the core foundations of agency will not change over the future, just applied in different ways. More and more mainstream games are including all these types of agency, so they will only become more cemented in game design. – **Krzysztof**

I think VR is revolutionary and is a great inclusion to gaming. It helps people get away from the real world and feel like a hero or legend in their own way and will become more popular and common use in the future. - **Brandon**

In relation to microtransactions I believe that this business model is damaging games as a whole. Due to the DLC splitting the player base from individuals who will pay for additional content and those who will not. – **Adam**

Thanks for watching.