Shanghai Memory as a case study of ideological impact on storytelling: the interplay between memory, language, and stories

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Outline

Background:
- Stories in GLAMs
- Memory, language and stories in the library
- The interplay between the three

Case study:
- ‘Shanghai Cultural Collection’ project
- ‘A Journey from Wukang Road’ project

Summary:
- Stories presented via language
- Ideological impact on historical storytelling
Stories in GLAMs

GLAM institutions:
• Repositories for the human record and creativity
• Collections of various forms of human narrative
• Need appropriate ways to fully present, reconstruct, and disseminate those ‘stories’
• Stories are important elements of cultural heritage

*Digital Turn*

Methodological and epistemological shift in GLAMs (Barber, 2016; Daković, 2021)
‘Storytelling’ to ‘Digital storytelling’

Memory is defined as the ‘action of remembering; recollection, remembrance’

Library is viewed as ‘carriers of human memory’ and ‘social memory devices’

Library + Memory: documents and other memory forms that are preserved in libraries become important "mediums" in memory research since 1980s

Memory materials in library:
• Books and manuscripts and precious documentary heritage
• Photographs, Audiovisual materials
• Maps, stone inscriptions & other forms of memory
Language is a key means by which people build and engage with infrastructures and ideologies (Henninger, 2020).

Libraries contain people, texts, information, instruction, and more, all of which rely on language to relate to each other (Henninger, 2020).

Language in general has power, specific languages have more power than others in many contexts, a situation which is sometimes referred to as linguistic dominance (Accurso, 2015).

Languages in China:
• Officially, there are 302 living languages in China¹
• China remains a land of impressive linguistic diversity

¹https://studycli.org/learn-chinese/languages-in-china/
Well-crafted stories can communicate abstract and complex ideas in ways that **encourage understanding**;

Effective stories inspire people by creating **human connection** and **emotional resonance** (Rockefeller Foundation 2014).

As an approach to construct and express meaning, storytelling can also be seen as a process of **reconstructing memory, the past as well as the culture** of individuals, groups, and communities (Fu, Mahony & Liu, 2023).
Language is one of the principal mediums through which meaning is mobilized in the social world (Thompson, 1987).

Diverse forms of memory reflecting personal, collective, social and cultural memory levels.

Reconstructing memory, the past and culture of a group or community.

They are reconstructed, reorganized, and presented through storytelling.
Shanghai Cultural Collection

- Knowledge extracted: people, organization, geographical name, architecture, event
- Diverse memory forms organized and linked by knowledge
- Help users to discover stories through memory materials

Shanghai city 1825-1949

Photos
Movies
Audio recording
A Journey from Wukang Road

Fig1. A map of Shanghai showing the former French Concession
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:FormerFrenchConcessionMap.jpg

Fig2. Wukang Road
Stories presented by language

http://wkl.library.sh.cn
Stories presented via language

Language is closely connected with cultural identity, community, and the sense of self (Tönnies 2001)

Shanghainese remains popular amongst locals as a way of confirming their identity as indigenous people (Shen 2016)

Through language, “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how people understand their possibilities for the future.” (Norton 1997: 410)
Ideological impact on historical storytelling

- In historical storytelling project, the diverse memory forms reflect the ideological and social change.
- This democratisation of adding diverse memory materials and voices in DH projects challenges the established historiography based on official archival records.
- Ideology is found to have a strong impact in a sense of community and solidarity by pulling together personal and isolated experiences into a collective and cohesive whole, which is important when generating stories in GLAM institutions.


Henninger, Ean(2020):"Multilingualism, neoliberalism, and language ideologies in libraries".Inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.


References


Henning, E. (2020). "Multilingualism, neoliberalism, and language ideologies in libraries". In the library with the lead pipe.


Thank you!

Shanghai Memory--Shanghai Cultural Collection Project: https://scc.library.sh.cn/#/

A Journey from Wukang Road: http://wkl.library.sh.cn

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