

Mat Kilau Kebangkitan Pahlawan: A Cognitive Study Through Freytag's Dramatic Structure

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ABSTRACT

The popularity of film storylines that glorify heroes fighting for their nation has spread throughout Malaysia. This advancement has increased the income of the country's creative industry while also improving the talents of creative professionals. Due to the high level of competition, special effects, shooting techniques, and even storytelling processing are the primary factors employed in enhancing a film's success. Using Freytag's Pyramid, the film *Mat Kilau* is a case study to identify students' knowledge of the film's narrative and camera skills and techniques. Open-ended questionnaires were delivered to 37 students in free-form written responses to obtain a wealth of information about how the respondents think and relate to what they have learnt over the semester. The content analysis measures how often certain words, subjects, and ideas appear in a text. The approach turns qualitative input into quantitative data to draw accurate conclusions about what people thought of the movie. In this study, the data suggest that students pay more attention to sequences with many sound effects, different forms of camera tracking, and rapid shot changes. The selection of students who felt the best scene served as the film's Climax is observed.

Keywords: *Video education, Visual language, Freytag's Pyramid.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is the backbone of personal knowledge and skills in applying learning in doing work tasks and living life. Education is not only subject to direct learning in the classroom, but they can also learn from the experiences they see or watch in movies (Lee, 2019). Education has the power to influence individual lives as well as the future of nations (Lövdén et al., 2020) and the entire planet (Turabova, 2021). Education aims to empower people by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their most significant potential and be decent citizens (Perry, 2018). As a result, higher education educators have begun using innovative and transformative assessments that are less generic, more impactful, and personal. Video presentations, filmmaking, digital essays, documentary making, social experiments, and event management help students learn more and develop employability skills (Perry, 2018). These examinations also require students to think more carefully about how they will use available technology to convey their ideas in a distinctive and new manner.

Mat Kilau from the film *Mat Kilau: The Rise of Heroes* (2022) is not the same person from history. The makers of this film acknowledged this when they said from the start that it is not a historical film but instead uses Pahang Malay warrior figures. And historians who have viewed the video say that only 10% is factual, with the rest being a fabrication. *Mat Kilau* was not a national hero; he was only a Pahang warrior fighting to evict the British colonists over the matter of tax collection, not to obtain independence. Other Malay Peninsula states, including Sabah and Sarawak, have their warriors, such as *Mat Salleh* in Sabah, Rentap in Sarawak, and *Dol Said* in Negeri Sembilan. *Mat Kilau* then vanished for a long time, reappearing later in 1969 and dying a year later. As a result, the book about him is severely deficient in facts used to produce a complete film. Many historians still argue his account and what the Sikh warriors did, among other incidents.

Mat Kilau is just the story of a local character. The movie is also just a light entertainment movie with extreme action and emotional dialogue that can only attract local audiences' attention. Almost all films or film genres concerning the local community's opposition to British, Italian, Spanish, and other colonisation include gestures and energetic and enthusiastic dialogues (Tan, 2018). It resulted in the primary character becoming exaggerated (Matharu et al., 2022). There aren't many films of this type where the director chooses not to emphasise the presentation of dialogue and heroic scenes in which they demonstrate martial arts prowess or use firearms to capture colonial leaders and soldiers. Films about *Mat Kilau* are stuck in this style because they are appropriate for viewers who are not fluent in the language of a movie; therefore, they select a visual approach from others since softer systems will not capture their interest (Tan, 2018).

Mat Kilau also surpassed the large Hollywood pictures to become the number one film in the weekly box office ranking for five weeks. Since being shown on June 23, the film, inspired by the country's true history, has become one of the primary topics on social media, arousing the spirit of heroism. Many people attend the theatre dressed in Malay clothes (Mohamad, 2022). It shows that film director Shamsul Yusof understands what the industry's audience wants.

Drama and appeal are found in movies by students who want to perceive things visually. Films may captivate students' attention, raise awareness, spark interest, point out problems, and encourage discussion when they are well chosen and presented (Kalyani & Rajasekaran, 2018). Films are both academically and emotionally demanding, offering an extraordinary chance to help students grow in significant ways (Nittoli & Guiffida, 2018; Williamson, 2004). This research was to determine how much photography students comprehend digital video topics. This study is cognitive level 2 of Bloom's Taxonomy, wherein students' comprehension is evaluated based on their responses to the film-related questions. The researcher used Freytag's pyramid to guide the students' understanding of the formation of films. Freytag's pyramid allows them enough time to become close to the characters, reach the Climax (or tragedy, if it's a disaster), and gain readers' trust as they progress through the film. This study suggests that

three narrative aspects, namely Exposition, Climax, and Denouement, are the most important elements in establishing a dramatic structure for any school video project. The main questions on which this research concentrates were as follows:

1. What does the movie's Introduction, Climax, and Ending tell you based on what you've seen in the film?
2. What is the shot size, camera angle, and camera movement used at the film's beginning, Climax, and ending scene?
3. Why were those camera shots, angles, and movements used at the film's beginning, Climax, and ending scene?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual language Context in films and Its Influence on Viewers' Perceptions

"Visual language" refers to how a story's images convey ideas or meanings to the viewers. Perspective, colour, and shape are tools to bolster a tale by directing the viewer to see and experience particular aspects of the narrative. Like written language employs letters, words, phrases, and paragraphs to convey meaning, the film uses shots, shot sequences, scenes, and dramatic sequences (Hurbis-Cherrier, 2018). The film narrative will become more impactful, and overall appeal will improve when utilising the visual language as an organising structure. The visual language will help boost the narrative power and attractiveness of the film.

According to Levin and Baker (2022), conveying the film's visual elements complement the dialogue and may aid the viewers in understanding what. Filmmakers' long-held beliefs in the correlation between the visual language elements and the successful delivery of scripted dialogue in the industry's history (Reid & Sanders, 2021). The influences of the visual language used in the scenes take separate shots of the action from the variation of shots and angles. Then, putting the scenes together into a coherent whole to show a meaningful sequence of efforts to bring the viewer's attention and to make those films more emotionally and intellectually robust. Additionally, the filmmaker usually wants the viewers to be less aware of cuts and sudden changes between shots that can be distracting (Levin & Keliikuli, 2020).

Therefore, a visual language context in film production involves creative tasks that can have a major impact and significant influence on the viewer to grasp the scenes' perception. Elements of visual language can influence a viewer's perception, develop skills, create an argument, and be a problem solver (Perry, 2018).

Film as education

As we can see, today, people are accustomed to seeing violent situations, particularly in documentaries, news broadcasts, and action movies. That violent movie may earn top marks from most critics and continues to be the most popular series among viewers. Although violent sequences in films are not always perceived negatively, viewing violent scenes might make viewers indifferent. Films frequently include these violent scenes; thus, they eventually come to be seen as the film's artistic expression (Simanjuntak et al., 2021).

The film is a dynamic and potential tool for education through its content and technical approach. The exciting storytelling and editing create excitement and enrich the viewers' ideas. Education provides pupils with the ability to assess, synthesise, and critique. Films that require kids to tie what they witness to social ideas and theories can make it more challenging (Moskovich & Sharf, 2012). It demonstrates that educators may figure out educational resources, incorporating cinema as one of the ways to reach a variety of learning objectives for pupils (Fjällström, 2010).

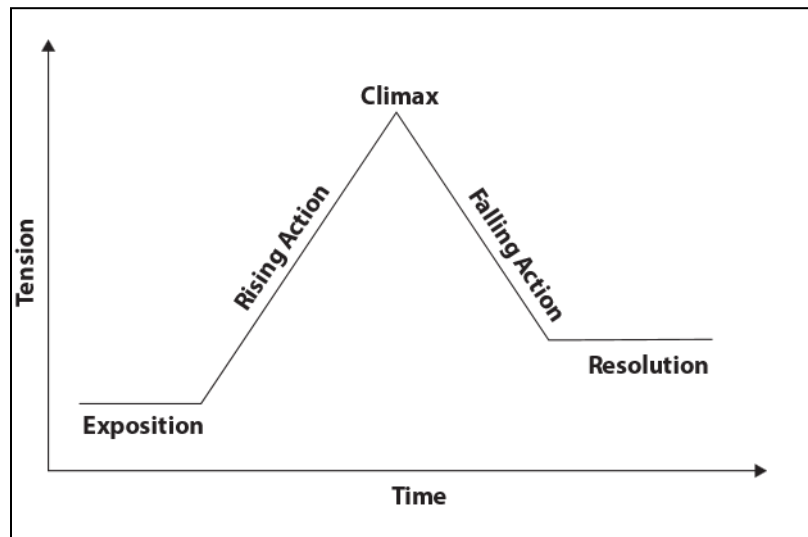
The film study thoroughly examines videos by focusing on their defining characteristics. The information flow and the audio-visual representation of the information are the two main factors taken into the video analyses. Wijnker (2019) mentioned that the first segment, known as the formal system, establishes how information is chosen, composed, and coloured; the second, known as the stylistic system, establishes how information is presented audio-visually through *mise en scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound. In genre, the video's cinematic form competes for formal and stylistic systems (Bordwell et al., 2017). He also added that, as film norms shape audience expectations, genres may greatly assist viewers in making sense of what is shown.

In developing students' visualities toward abstract thought (Bordwell et al., 2017), watching films promotes critical thinking, fosters in-depth knowledge, and makes students interested in their studies more active (Liang & Fung, 2021; Nyström, 2019; Wagner, 2019). According to Li (2021) learning via aesthetics through the movie encourages learner reflection as narrated in an audio-visual format. Enhancing emotions establishes the foundation for expressing ideas. Movie experiences serve as emotional memories that help people form attitudes and sustain them as points of reflection in daily activities and situations.

Bringing films into the educational process might encourage students' social thinking and sensitivity to other people's viewpoints (Bordwell et al., 2017; Moskovich & Sharf, 2012) and allow students to interpret their new experiences and draw connections to their past knowledge, according to the meaningful learning hypothesis (Abuhassna et al., 2020).

Freytag's Pyramid

Aristotle was the first poet to propose this plot's form. According to him, a story must have a start, middle, and end, and its events must be connected causally (Golden, 1975). The Aristotelian plot framework was rising in popularity as time went on. One is Freytag's Pyramid narrative structure, which was first presented in 1983 by Gustav Freytag. These days, Gustav Freytag's narrative structure is the one that is mentioned more frequently than Aristotle's plot structure (Froehlich, 2020). Freytag's pyramid is divided into exposition, rising action, Climax, falling action, and conclusion (An, 2021; Froehlich, 2020; Munro & Hope, 2022). Exposition is explained as a component of the story's world introduction so that the viewer can become familiar with and understand a portion of the plot. Then, proceed to the Rising Action section, where the audience is introduced to the conflict or problem as it escalates. It is where the problem first arises. Enter the Climax phase after that, where the protagonist must resolve issues with himself or other characters that will affect the course of the narrative. Key issues raised in the Climax section are addressed further in the Falling Action section when difficulties can be resolved by the novel's characters. The story then finishes in the denouement part, where the primary problem ends in conflict, and everything is normal.



**Figure 1. Freytag's "pyramid" shows a five-part plot structure with rising and receding tension.
Based on Freytag (1900)**

(Source: <https://academic.oup.com/icb/article/58/6/1213/5061516>)

The Exposition, Climax and Denouement

The exposition was also known as the Introduction. The Exciting Force, the Introduction in Freytag's Pyramid, includes the Inciting Incident or Inciting Action (Freytag, 1863). Updated models give this event its position on the pyramid. Since every story must begin somewhere, Freytag's Pyramid starts with the exposition. The main fictitious components of the story—the setting, characters, style, etc.—are generally introduced in this section (Bressmer, 2022). The exposition's primary purpose is to set up the setting for the conflict in the novel. Exposition length is the complexity of the story's conflict, shown in the size of the world and the author's personal preferences (Bressmer, 2022). Exposition in cinema can frequently be challenging to implement naturally. Too little information leads to audience confusion, while too much information causes them to lose interest (Rapp & Salovich, 2018). The correct amount of explanation is typically the result of a director having faith in the viewer's capacity to create connections (Gaillard et al., 2021). Another aspect of this is recognizing what information is vitally essential for them to know.

A climax is a crisis in which the rising action turns around and becomes the falling action, marking a vital moment in action drama (Pratama & Desnaranti, 2022). Cutting (2016) agrees that the Climax is the continuation plot from the first turning action, which is the rising action. The Climax is the second turning point, followed by the falling action. At the same time, a resolution is the end of the act of falling and solving the problem (Pratama & Desnaranti, 2022). However, the Ending of every narrative is not always happy and pleasant. It might be vice versa or make the viewers conclude their perception of the films. Cutting (2016) stated that the ultimate turning point in a movie occurs when the plot's unresolved concerns are revealed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participant's recruitment

This study discusses the student's perceptions of camera technique and understanding of the narrative content. The findings of these studies are based on an assessment of an open-ended questionnaire distributed to a group of students taking the subject of Digital Video (PCT294) for Diploma Photography and Creative Imaging at Universiti Teknologi Mara. Thirty-seven students participated in the research as it complements their additional marks for the specific subject.

For 13 weeks, students were taught the components of digital video through a syllabus explicitly built for this subject. The syllabus emphasises video narration content, camera angle techniques, camera movements, shots, and composition. It was developed for the Digital Video (PCT294) course to bring students closer to the knowledge of using camera methods in making excellent images to grab the interest of the audience. This study examines students' understanding of their ability to identify video production techniques in films they have seen. According to the syllabus, students will locate digital video techniques in films they see after being exposed to them for 13 weeks. The goal of watching the movie is for students to better understand how to use digital video methods in the correct context so that they can make good video assignments in the future.

An academic program was held to gather students to view the local film with the highest Malaysia Box Office dominating movie at the cinema to achieve the outcome. Students watch the film at the theatre because it is a powerful way to spread culture, education, entertainment, and propaganda. Its values have a long-lasting effect on the audience. It can draw people into the story and make an impression on them through the roles of the different characters, how they talk, dress, etc. (Grubba, 2020). Troscianko et al. (2012) suggest that our perceptions are affected by several perceptual consistency impacts, such as the size of the screen staying the same, which means that our perception of the size of the screen (object) itself affects how we react to the film.

Mat Kilau's movie guides students to summarise and identify camera techniques and students' knowledge of the film's content. At the beginning of the survey, students were given an explanation about the questions' prerequisites before seeing the film to make it easier for them to answer the questions. Students are encouraged to take notes and copy them, if necessary, throughout the screening to avoid missing key information based on the questions given. Incorporating open-ended questions into a quantitative self-report-based questionnaire approach can add a lot of depth and value to the studies' findings (Harland & Holey, 2011). The quality of answers to open-ended attitude questions depends on the characteristics of both the respondent and the survey. These characteristics interact with each other in a small way (Schmidt et al., 2020).

Open-ended survey questionnaire

An open-ended inquiry has the significant advantage that there are no restrictions on the response (Dalati & Marx Gómez, 2018; Opie, 2019; Rathi & Ronald, 2022). As a result, the people who fill out the survey can tell whatever they think is essential to know. On the other hand, closed questions severely restrict the possible answers (Opie, 2019). Respondents can enter as much information as they want while answering open-ended questions (Rathi & Ronald, 2022). Additional information aids in qualifying and clarifying their responses, resulting in more accurate data and helpful insight (Dalati & Marx Gómez, 2018). Free-form written responses give a lot of information about how the respondent thinks. Reading someone else's thoughts in their own words can teach you a lot, from the core logic of their reasoning to the stages of their thought process to how they use language and what they think.

Questions have been uploaded into Google Forms to make it easier for students to access their questions. It is because most students have agreed to use the platform as a place for them to answer

questions instead of using manual writing techniques on paper. Each question is placed in a must-answer format so that no question is left unanswered by the respondent. According to Sischka et al. (2022), forced responding (FA) is a standard answer structure in online surveys requiring respondents to respond to each question to move on to the next one. The main goal is to lessen the amount of missing data (Sischka et al., 2022). The survey was available online (5–10 July 2022) and took 15–30 minutes to complete.

The content analysis investigates and quantifies the presence of specific words, subjects, and concepts in a text. The approach converts qualitative input into quantitative data to draw accurate inferences about what respondents thought of the movie.

Data Analysis

Two data analysis methods were used to assess the qualitative data gathered throughout the data gathering phase. The first step was to adhere to Creswell's (2012) qualitative content analysis framework (Figure 2). To have a basic understanding of the data, it was all transcribed and read. Then, text segments that were related to one another were given a code label.

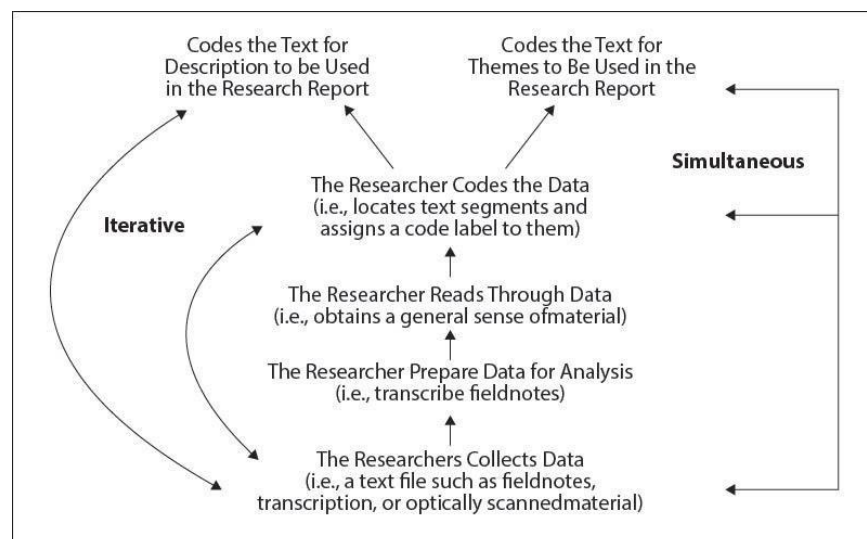


Figure 2. The qualitative content analysis scheme (Creswell, 2012, p.237)

The constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to create categories after the initial coding phase, during which preliminary codes were found, and before coding the text for themes. To remove repetition and arrive at categories to be presented as findings, the researcher continually compared codes to codes and themes to themes both inside and across cases.

FINDINGS

The use of NVivo software to analyse the data is to acquire a general sense of its themes and to drill down into the data for further in-depth study. We quickly ran a Word Frequency query to determine which words participants used the most frequently. A word frequency count gives researchers an overview of a data set's most prevalent (typically semantic-based) words. The author focuses on frequent mention of words (and phrases). These words will identify the respondent's main opinion in answering the questions (see figure 3).

The exposition or Introduction's primary goal is to provide information on the circumstances surrounding a movie's storyline. It can be character features, motivations, historical context, or themes that all help the viewer better understand the main plot of a film (McAdams, 2018). According to Figure 4, the researchers discovered that students answered questions swiftly and confidently based on their observations of the film's opening. When asked what they thought about the beginning of *Mat Kilau's* film, most students said it was a story about the history of British colonisation over Malaya. The majority of them give nearly identical responses.

"The movie tells us how the British tried to invade Malay land in 1892."

"Introduction of this story tells me about our country was colonised by the British government and reminds me back to the history before our country's independence."

"The scene was about the chaos in the Land of Malay. It shows the war between The Malays and the British."

"British came to Pahang to take all the resources, and they eliminated all Malays that were against British."

"It tells of the British colonisers who wanted to conquer the Malay lands and thought anyone who tried to fight the British was a rebel and put to death."

Some also responded to the film's Introduction by discussing the villagers' demands to be freed from colonialism. They rebelled and were eager to fight back because they believed invaders had stolen their land rights and mistreated them as weak humans. Many students feel the plot of the first chapter of the narrative is full of brutality and violence. It was what made the movie intriguing and enticed people to watch it. The audience's spirits are lifted when they learn what happened in those days till the rise of the Malay warriors who opposed the colonists at the time.

"The beginning of the movie shows how cruel the colonisers were towards Malays when British Colonial Rule in the Lands Of Pahang in 1892."

"There are many interesting scenes at the story's beginning, for example, when people are killed for rebelling against what the British have done."

"At the beginning of the film tells the story of the people of Malaya who are dissatisfied with the arrival of the British army rudely and use violence on women and children."

"Through the opening scenes, we can see the story's antagonist (Captain H.C Syers) with the scene of them massacring the village people for disobeying and rebelling against the British."

Some students prefer the action sequence, claiming that the beginning of the story is where *Mat Kilau* and his companions sprint through the woods and demonstrate Silat's abilities to the audience. It is most likely because they are so obsessed with spectacular action pictures that they miss the first plotline at the story's beginning. Scenes like this are more imprinted in their minds, and they believe this is the true beginning of the Malay warriors' revolt against the colonisers.

"The training scene at the beginning introduces the warriors that will save the country."

"The introduction showing the main casts, they introduced the characters by showing the fight scene using Silat movements."

"Showing off the Malay Hero, Mat Kilau and his friends/teammates battle abilities during their training."

“The movie introduces its main character, Mat Kilau, in one action scene to show the power of Mat Kilau. Furthermore, they also introduce their second main character, which is Awang.”

“Mat Kilau and his friends showed Silat’s skill to protect their village and planned to expel the British using force against the villagers.”

According to Samanjutak et al. (2021), viewing films with violent content is not necessarily negative. These purposefully violent sequences evoke the audience's emotions, allowing them to relate the movie's events to their circumstances. Additionally, he said that violent situations portrayed in movies could convey values. It sparks one eagerness and excitement to know what is happening in the whole story throughout the film. As a researcher who observes student attitude while watching the movie, none of the students is taking a break between the shows. Everyone sat straight and focused the whole film.

Answering what camera technique can show the overall narrative of the story, most students mention that the film emphasises wide shots and high angles to show the overall situation and where the event took place. They also said the tracking movement technique wants the audience to follow the character and feel the actor’s actions. These results show that the students understand the purpose of the camera technique and its use in making an exciting video, especially at the beginning of a story.

The Climax of the movie

Students received the option to express their ideas and understandings regarding the location of the film's Climax using Google Form-based investigative questions. According to Freytag (1863), the Climax is where the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist reaches its peak in the story (or if there is only one main character, the darkness or lightness of that character appears to take control). Questions were designed to determine whether students grasped the topic based on their understanding of narrative video production. Students have utilised Freytag’s narrative Pyramid as a guide to solving the question. The questionnaire asks, "Which scene do you consider to be the film's climax?". Then the students were asked, “Why were those shots, camera angles, and camera movement used in the climax scene?”.

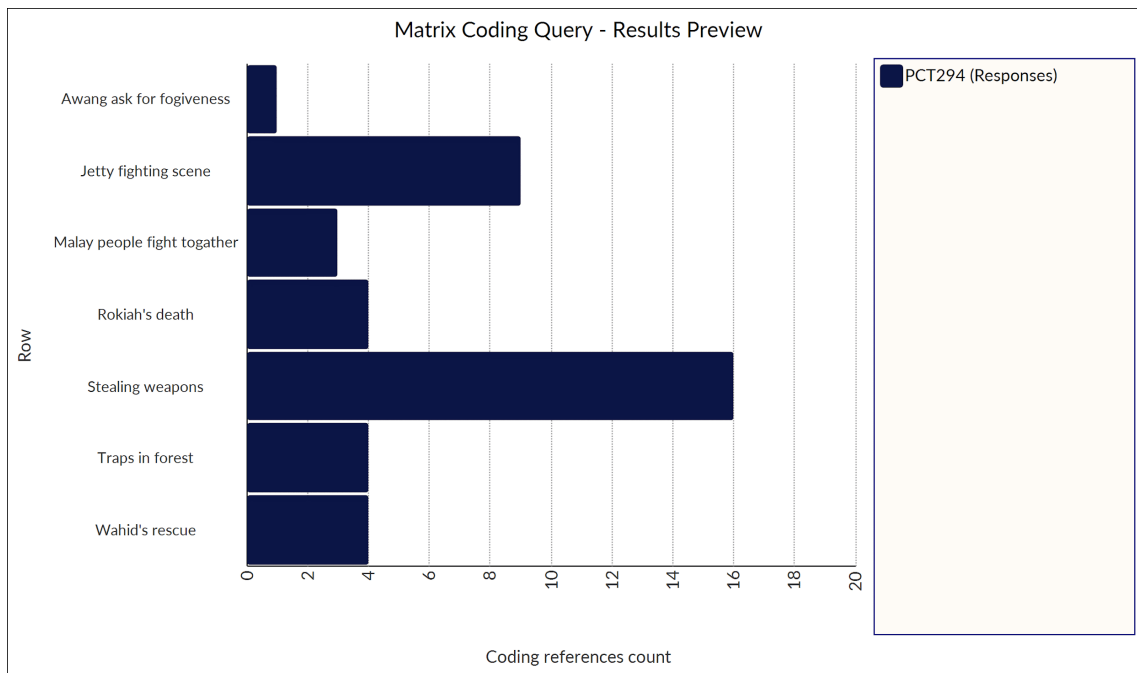


Figure 5: Data on some students giving an opinion about the Climax scene.

According to Freytag (1863), the Climax is the pivotal moment, and this third arc causes a shift in the protagonist's circumstances—either for the better or worse. When a tragedy is enhanced, the Climax is the point at which the plot begins to unravel, and things begin to go wrong. The data showed that out of 37 students who answered questionnaires, 16 of which is the highest percentage of 43%, said the climax scene was when *Awang* and his friends stole British weapons at night. When asked why they chose the plot, most students say that it is the cause of the climax scene's existence and the beginning of the reason for all the problems. The scene's Climax was from the commencement of *Awang* stealing weapons to a battle between *Mat Kilau* and British soldiers on the jetty. Another nine people, 24%, said the climax scene was when *Mat Kilau* attacked the jetty and tried to kill Captain Syerz.

When students select the climax moment, most of the storyline uses elements from the explosion, such as dispersed ground, flying leaves and branches, persons slipping, scattered props, and the impression of sounds that support the following situation. The scenes depicted have a quick pace with exciting action sequences. Furthermore, close-up representation approaches in detail provide the audience with a clearer perspective of the explosion's effect (Chiao, 2018). The camera movement also employs several tracking techniques to follow the actor's directions, supplemented with close-up shots of all the details in the scene. It suggests that today's younger generation is more interested in action and special effects than emotional and touching moments (Singh, 2019).

Despite most respondents choosing the action scene as the Climax, some of the four students said the scene of the murder of *Wahid's* wife *Rokiah* was the Climax. Surprisingly, the male respondents were the ones who suggested *Rokiah's* death scene. To answer the question, "Why were those shots, camera angles, and camera movement employed in the climax scene?" These selected students all said that it was because the scene used medium close-up shots to make viewers feel the situation close to their hearts. Another explanation might have to do with the types of emotions shown in the video clips' unfavourable social scenarios, which included illustrations of despair, wrath, and suffering. According to Jauniaux et al. (2020), these feelings may have influenced distinct responses, including avoidance, in the participants while they watched the scenes when others portrayed them. It could be due to female students feeling

uncomfortable in front of male students. In this situation, it might be necessary to actively strive to put oneself in another person's shoes (like in the up-regulation condition) to increase empathy when making a movie.

The scenario when *Mat Kilau's* gang rescued Wahid and the plan of trapping British soldiers in the forest resulted in the same number of respondents of four persons as the incident of *Rokiah's* death. Respondents who chose this scene as a climax also stated the scene's shot had good momentum. It also employs various camera movement methods in response to the actor's movements. Furthermore, when utilising a quick tempo, the short-range camera concentrates more on the consequences of the action, facial expressions, and the location's environment, such as explosions, woods, and dispersed dirt. Focusing is on the fight and the movement between the fighters. The medium shot fits the scenery of both fighters with the move. The over-the-shoulder angle is the primary angle to view a person when we need to focus on the action of that scene. Meanwhile, the static camera movements are the best choices in fighting scenes because we, as viewers, want a stable view to focus on the action instead of a shaky technique to show the audience's view experience.

The other three students chose the scene where the locals rose with Mat Kilau to confront the British, resulting in a British defeat. This scene takes place in the final 15 minutes of the film. The reason for choosing this scene was the same as the other respondents. The camera movement employs tracking techniques to follow the actor's training and multiple close-up shots to catch all the intricacies in action. They use tracking to create suspense during the fight so that the viewer feels the actor's excitement and energy. The scene is supposed to make the viewer feel fun and scared to watch and see how it ends up, whether prone to positive or negative circumstances.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to most students who provided input, they are saying that the Introduction is violent, with an impactful action scene and dramatic sound effects. Based on the observations, most students gave feedback that the Introduction is full of violence with the impact of an action scene and dramatic sound effects. Furious action scenes have become a staple in movies, adding to their allure for viewers. However, it is essential to consider the involvement of various societal groups in cinema studies, sensitivity to violence, and the necessity for age limitations when watching movies because it will encourage the young to imitate violent scenes in real life.

The student's understanding of Climax is triggered when the story's shot arouses the issues that started and caused the other problems that followed. While there are numerous responses to seeing the moment as the film's Climax, each selection of that climax component is due to the shots that have action, a fast tempo, and the use of special effects to represent the circumstances of the place. The sequences have a significant impact on persuading young people to be passionate about a film's genre. More research is needed to determine whether this element only impacts young individuals or if it affects people of all ages. Furthermore, gender disparities in thought may be mirrored in the audience that saw a film like this.

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