

A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratee

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Abstract

The study entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratee aimed to develop a screenplay adapted from an E-san novel, Ratee, through the study of the novel. The research designed the methodology using qualitative research methods by collecting documents from state and private government and educational institutes, textbooks, research, films, and novels. The Three Act Storytelling concept was applied to analyze the structure of the novel, Ratee, which received the Young That Artist Award of 2007 by the Siam Cement Group Foundation, and used the Narrative Theory to develop Treatment and Screenplay. The last step was using the Tension evaluation form of the narrative structure that the researcher developed to analyze the situation and develop the screenplay.

The study results from the Three Act Narrative structure analysis, consisting of the setup, the confrontation, or build, and the resolution, or payoff, to the development of the novel's plot, Ratee, shows some differences. In the novel, the story is presented without chronology. However, the Three Act Narrative structure analysis requires a chronology in the storytelling. The use of the Narrative Theory, consisting of theme, plot, character, conflict, setting, point of view, and special symbols to develop the treatment and screenplay through the project's tension evaluation form developed by the researcher shows that the evaluation form helped the research to be able to develop situations in the screenplay to be better and more interesting, in terms of creating situations that affect the characters and create more tension.

Keywords: film production, screenplay writing, screenplay adaptation, E-san novel, screenplay structure evaluation form

Introduction

Films are considered a branch of art that tells stories through motion pictures. From the perspective of a contemporary cultural office, films were defined as the art of moving images arts or audiovisual, produced

on films, videotapes, or mixed media with a broad scope ranging from amateur films, family films, short films, experimental films, documentary films, to the entertainment business films, under a limited timeframe and locations, which might be true stories, realistic performances, or performance from the imagination of the creators, aimed to get the audience to be emotionally involved while watching them. Films were listed as the seventh branch of art due to their ability to create more emotional dimensions than other media through their aesthetic art. Additionally, they are also suitable mediums portraying history, social, cultural, and belief background, and other aspects of each era. The three main film production processes are as follows. Pre-production is a thought and filtering process to find the topics as a direction in writing screenplays.

Next is the preparation for the shooting and laying out a plan that will lead to the production, which is the process of shooting, performance, and film directing.

Every sector of the work needs to work in collaboration in order to produce the perfect film. The last process is the post-production process, the last step of directing. This process involves editing the story and situations to align with the images and sounds. The most difficult process is the pre-production process, which is finding the issue for the production.

These processes can be seen in many films that were adapted from famous novels, such as *Petch Pra Uma* (1971), a novel written by Panom Tian, starring S. Asanachinda; *Koo Gum*, written by Thommayanti, which was made into a movie four times in 1973, 1988, 1995, and 2013; *Plae Kao*, written by Mai Muangderm, which was also made into a movie four times in 1940, 1946, 1977, and 2014; *Luk I-san*, written by Kampon Boonthavee, the 1979 SEA Write Award-winning novel and was made into a movie in 1982; *Mae Bia*, written by Vanich Charungkitanan, adapted to a movie screen and shown in 1989 and 2001; *Ai-Fak*, adapted from the novel, *Khamphiphaksa*, by Chart Korbjitti, which brought audiences to tears in 2004, the same year as the film *The Tin Mine*, adapted from the *Tin Mine* series of short stories by Ajin Panjapan; *The Happiness of Kati*, another SEA Write novel adapted into a movie under Sahamongkol Films. Apart from the fact that Ngarpun Vejjajiva, the writer, helped write the script for the film, there was also an interesting promotion activity of finding a girl with characteristics similar to Kati to play the lead role in the film. Win Lyovarin also co-wrote the script for the film *Queens of Langkasuka* (2008) with Kongdej Jaturanrasamee, directed by Nonzee Nimibutr. Pen-ek Ratanaruang also took the novel, *Headshot*, and turned it into a film with the same name and was chosen as a representative for Thailand to be nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2012 Oscars. These examples show that good novels affect good and acceptable movie production since the grammar

of literature for the novels and films has similarities and differences in various areas. Novels emphasize communication through descriptive speech for the readers to use their imaginations and interpretations. On the other hand, movies use images to convey meanings. Therefore, turning novels into films requires the interpretation of the speech into images that convey the meanings to the receivers, which is a challenging task.

The novel *Ratree*, by Sakda Sakaew, Bachelor of Mass Communication, Faculty of Information Sciences, Mahasarakham University, is another novel that received the Young Thai Artist Award of 2007 by the Siam Cement Group Foundation. The novel is a story of a dark-skinned, curly hair, African Thai girl longing for the love of her parent without even knowing who her parents are. She lived with her grandparents on a piece of land at the far end of a village. Her grandparents worked as farmers, working as much as possible while selling basketry on the side to earn additional income. They lived a simple and self-sufficient life. Other villagers would generally pick a fight with the family since the girl's face was different from others, especially her bully group of friends in the same class. Nothing she loves ever comes true. Apart from being separated from her parents, her grandfather later passed away due to excessive work, while her grandmother had tuberculosis and was accused of being possessed by an evil spirit. Their house and farm were eventually burnt down.

Even an orphan goose, which the girl imagined was her mother, was bitten and killed by the village head's foreign breed dog without anyone stepping out to take responsibility. Unfortunate things kept happening in the girl's life until she met a kind uncle who lost a daughter who was the girl's age. His wife also lost her sanity after losing their daughter. The girl who lost the people she loved and an uncle who lost her daughter helped fulfill what each of them was missing.



Figure 1 The novel *Ratree*, by Sakda Sakaew

The story of a girl named Ratree from the novel takes place in the context of the E-san culture, a region with various unique ethnic identities. Laoakka (2023) identified the importance of community identity as the sum of unique characteristics of particular well-known or remembered objects. Each society has its way of life and culture tied to the aspect of humanity. The inequality faced by Ratree, an African Thai girl, within the E-san social context, is a refreshing mixture that has enough value to be presented in the form of a film to expose the issue of discrimination, equality, and marginalization while communicating with a deep storytelling power. Therefore, the research aimed to adapt the novel, *Ratree* into a screenplay to prepare to be produced into a film in the future.

Research Objectives

1. To develop a screenplay adapted from an E-san novel

Research Methodology

The study entitled *A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratree* was qualitative research that aimed to analyze the narrative structure components of the novel, *Ratree*, using the Three Act Storytelling concepts, consisting of set up, confrontation or build, and resolution or payoff to develop a plot. Narrative Theory, consisting of theme, plot, character, conflict, setting, point of view, and special symbols, was then used for the analysis to develop a screenplay through the tension evaluation form that the researcher created.

Research tools

The study entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratree used the following tools in the research data collection.

1. The novel Ratree
2. screenplay draft adapted from the novel Ratree
3. The tension evaluation form of the narrative structure

The process of creating and validating the research tools for data collection consisted of the following.

1. study the principles and theories from academic textbooks and literature related to Ratree to determine the research framework and concept.
2. Determine the study process and the frame for research tools for the study, Ratree's plot, and surveys of the narrative structure in the film.
3. Create the research tools according to the framework that aligns with the study's objective.

Data collection

For the research entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratree, the researcher compiled the data that addressed the research objectives. The data collection method consisted of the following.

1. Collect the data from the Three Act Storytelling narrative structure analysis that consisted of three parts: setup, confrontation or build, and resolution or payoff, and develop the plot for Ratree.
2. Collect the data from the Narrative Theory analysis that consisted of theme, plot, characters, conflicts, settings, points of view, and special symbols.
3. Collect the data from the tension evaluation form designed by the research from the draft plot for Ratree

Data Analysis and Interpretation

For the research entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratree, the researcher thoroughly studied the data collected from all documents, categorized the data according to the objective, and analyzed the data from documents, field research, and surveys using the theories. The conclusion was drawn from the data analysis, reviewed by experts, edited based on the experts' reviews, and presented using descriptive analysis with tables and images with captions.

Result of the Study

The results of the study entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratre are as follows.

Three Act Storytelling Narrative Structure Analysis

The Three Act Storytelling narrative structure analysis consisted of three following parts: setup, confrontation or build, and resolution of payoff, and can be concluded as follows.

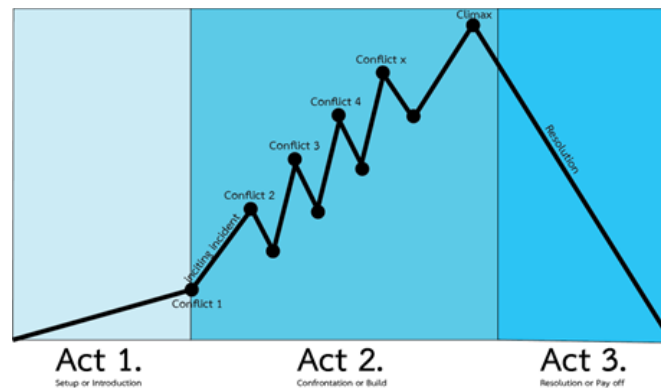


Figure 2 Plot from the Three Act Storytelling narrative structure

From the graph, it can be concluded as follow. Starting from the opening scene in Act 1, set up or introduction, the general context of E-san society was presented, including important characters, main and supporting characters, their characteristics, social status, beliefs, and needs. The story progressed until Conflict 1, when Thiwa, Ratre's only close friend, moved to another province with their parents, leaving Ratre alone, facing bullying from Somkiat and his goons. This crucial situation led the story to progress to Act 2, confrontation or build. This transition shows that the story was leading to challenges and an effort to get away from the hands of the Amnart's, the village head, family. Both Somkiat and Amnartwere the ones who hurt Ratre's family. For instance, an investor wanted to buy Jaem, Ratre's grandmother's, land, but she would not sell it, which led to many bullying incidents and the accusation that the grandmother was possessed by Pob, an evil spirit. Eventually, the story entered the Climax point and Act 3, resolution or payoff. When Jaem passed away because of all her sicknesses, there was also a rumor that she was possessed by Pob and had passed down Pob's spirit to Ratre. This incident caused a lot of difficulties for Ratre in terms of living in society. Uncle Chom was a character that came in and helped save Ratre from those difficulties, allowing her to survive in that pressuring situation by bringing her back to his home. That was the resolution to the problems. The story proved that the theme was about fulfilling what each other is missing from the story's beginning and

creating balance in the lives of the two characters, making them as perfect as they could be.

The application of the Three Act Storytelling concept, typically used in films rather than novels, in analyzing the novel's narrative, although similar, there were still some clear differences. (1) The storytelling technique in novels uses that language that communicates to readers and allows them to use their imagination along with the author through rhetoric or the use of beautiful words to tell a story and affect the emotions and feelings of the readers to want to follow along with the story. Films emphasize the presentation of images to create visuals and meaning through the visuals the audiences are watching. When adapting stories from novels to films, there is no need to use beautiful words to encourage imagination, but there needs to be descriptions about the components of the scenes, which include location, set, props, characters, costumes, mood and tone, and dialogues. (2) Story structure. Novels are divided into parts or chapters. The novel *Ratree* has 18 chapters or parts. Each chapter ended that part of the story. However, the content is tied to one another and draws the connection, creating an intriguing story from the start to the end. From the structure analysis, which includes setup, confrontation or build, resolution or payoff, similar to films, each part contains various events or scenes. When many situations are combined, they create a sequent, and a compilation of sequent creates a story. Therefore, (3) *Ratree* uses many narrative mechanisms to tell stories, such as telling stories according to the conditions of the situations and tone, switching between telling stories and situations that occur, and parallel storytelling.

The researcher used the method of telling a story based on the condition of time to lay out a film plot using Three Act Storytelling. The direction of the storytelling graph in Figure 1 shows the structure of Three Act Storytelling structure and the plot to use in the analysis and create the story in the next step.

After the researcher used the Three Act Storytelling, consisting of setup, confrontation or build, and resolution of payoff, to develop the film plot for *Ratree*, the Narrative Theory, consisting of plot, theme, character, and conflict, was used for the analysis to create the screenplay.

In conclusion, the use of Narrative Theory to analyze the Novel *Ratree* shows that the principle can be used to create exciting stories at a satisfactory level. The theme, or the story's main topic, is the topic that the film tries to communicate to the audience after the film ends.

(1) To analyze the theme of the novel *Ratree*, the researcher considered the loss of the father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother as what *Ratree* is missing. Uncle Chom and Auntie Rak also lost their daughter, whose name was also *Ratree*. Therefore, the theme of the novel that will

be used to develop into a screenplay is "fulfilling what each other is missing."

(2) The plot consists of five steps, exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and ending. These steps helped the research to determine the story within the narrative frame. The situations in the story can also be made to be more or less intense and worth following in screenplays.

Therefore, the plot is the novel *Ratree* that was adapted into a screenplay is as follows. "An African Thai, dark-skinned girl who wants to receive warmth from her father and mother at least once, even though she knows that her hope will never come true."

(3) Based on the principle, the main character, *Ratree*, has three conflicts. The first is internal conflict, the conflict, or a knot, inside *Ratree*. The most prominent ones are her looks, lack of parental love, mute grandmother, and deceased grandfather. It can be said that *Ratree* is the most tragic character in the story, with a weight in her heart that is too heavy for a girl to carry. The external conflict is with *Somkiat*, her classmate and the son of a powerful village head. As for the conflict with her environment, *Ratree* is an African Thai girl, which makes her look different from others around her. She believes she does not belong in this society that sees her as a monster. *Rattiga* (2559) states that there are five ways to deal with characters' conflict: overcome, compromise, avoidance, and surrender, which are all behaviors expressed to stop the conflict or create the same understanding through negotiation to create more acceptance. *Ratree* is considered to be in the dimension of avoidance.

(4) Character consists of the main character. *Ratree* is a 7-8 years old girl studying in primary school. She has dark skin and curly hair as she is an African Thai, is slender, has long arms and legs, and is slightly taller than other children of the same age. The supporting actors consist of the following. *Somkiat*, a chubby boy, light skin, loud, the same age as *Ratree*; Grandmother *Jaem*, a 70-year-old woman, mute, slender, with curly hair and dry and rough skin; Village Head *Amnart*, a 40 to 45-year-old man, chubby, has a mustache, loud, stern, serious, always getting what he wants; Uncle *Chom*, the same age as village head *Amnart*, chubby, and kind.

(5) The setting emphasizes natural settings within the social context of the E-san, such as houses, schools, and paddy fields. The constructed scenes were *Ratree's* thoughts and imagination.

(6) The point of view is the third person point of view observing the whole situation.

(7) Special symbols. The novel *Ratree* connects E-san social context and the presented issue emphasizing the marginalization problem through *Ratree*. This character has to face her fate as a person of foreign

ethnicity living a miserable life as a person without rights and voice, as well as Jaem, the grandmother, who, even though she has the same ethnicity as other people in the society, is mute and unable to communicate with words. After comparing the two characters, it can be seen that the author intended to use these characters to represent those without the right to live as equal human beings, similar to the current social bullying society today.

After having the screenplay for Ratree, the researcher designed the Tension Creation Table from the research, textbooks on screenplays, and the researcher's direct experience in this film's production, which can be explained as follows.

Screenplay Analysis using Tension Graph

The researcher developed the screenplay for Ratree by creating tensions for the characters through situations. In principle, each type of scene will consist of positive and negative value situations, each having five levels determined by the researcher. Afterward, the points for the positive and negative value situations were determined with a total of 77 scenes.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Tension Level | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene | Open Scene |
| | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene | Close Scene |
| | Value | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Positive Situation + | 5 | | | | |
| | 4 | | | | |
| | 3 | | | | |
| | 2 | | | | |
| | 1 | | | | |
| 0 | | | | | |
| Negative Situation - | -1 | | | | |
| | -2 | | | | |
| | -3 | | | | |
| | -4 | | | | |
| | -5 | | | | |
| Duration (S) | | | | | |
| Scene No. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Figure 3 Table of Screenplay Tensions

After determining the points, each point was connected with a line to create a narrative graph.

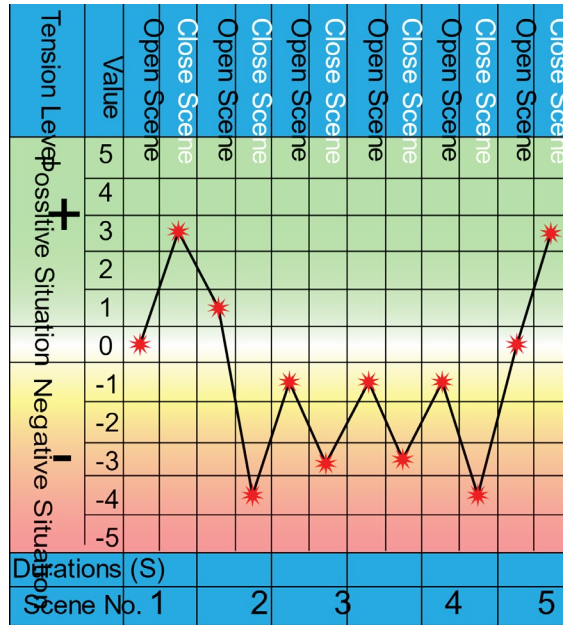


Figure 3 Table showing Tensions in the screenplay for Ratree

From the narrative graph of the screenplay for Ratree, it was found that each has an action or situation, either in the opening scene or closed scene. These situations can either be positive or negative. In principle, the situation has to switch between positive and negative for the character to be affected by those situations, and from the audience's perspective, they will tend to follow the story to see how the characters resolve those problems.

After determining the points for each situation and connecting each point, the narrative graph was created.

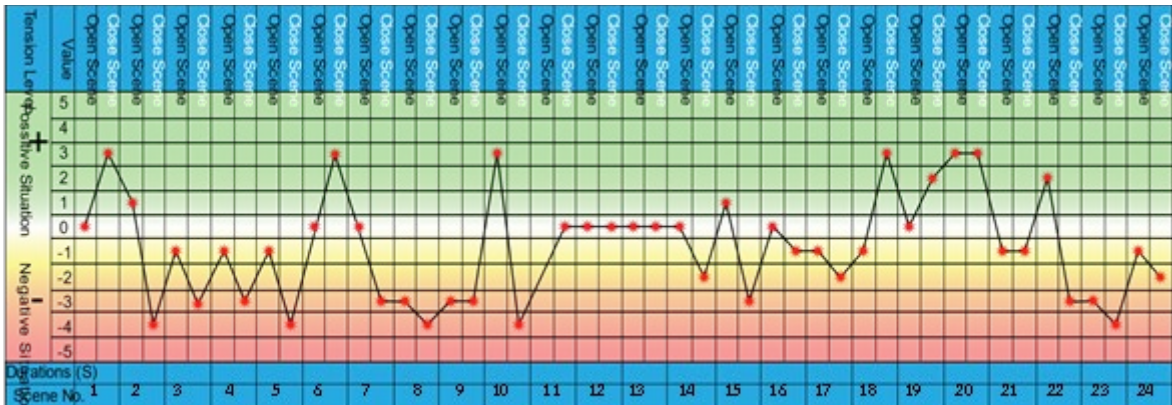
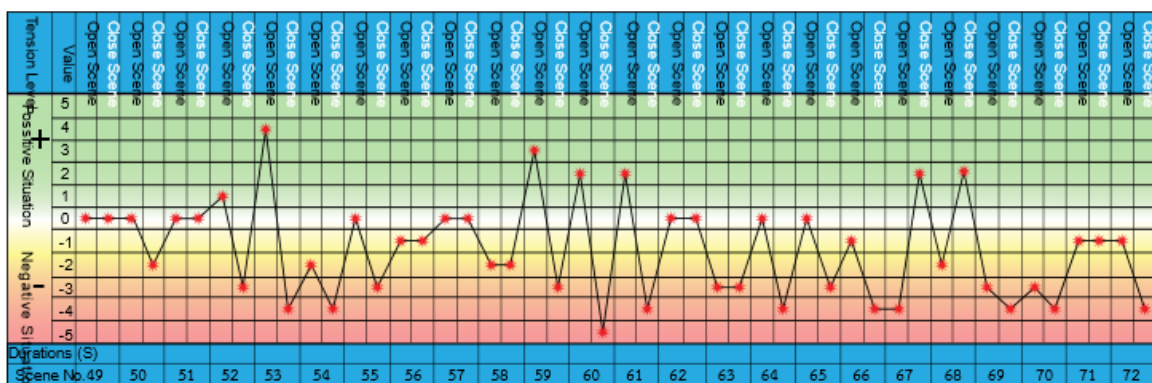
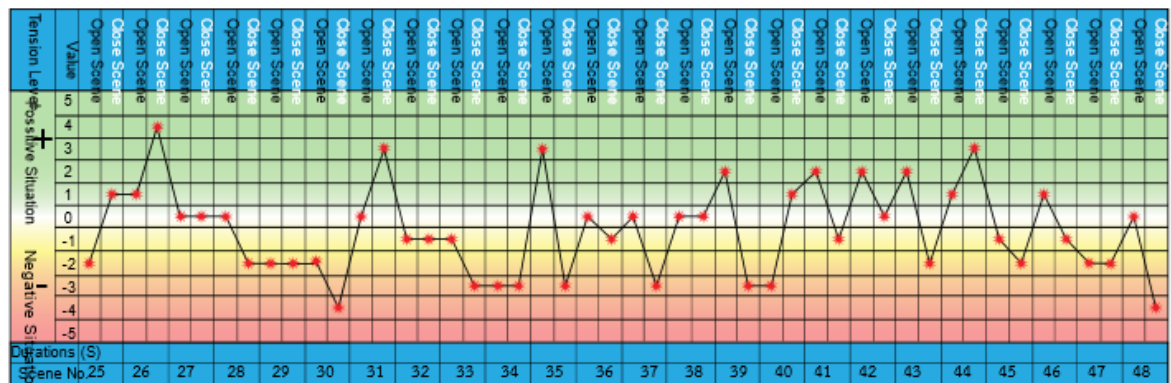
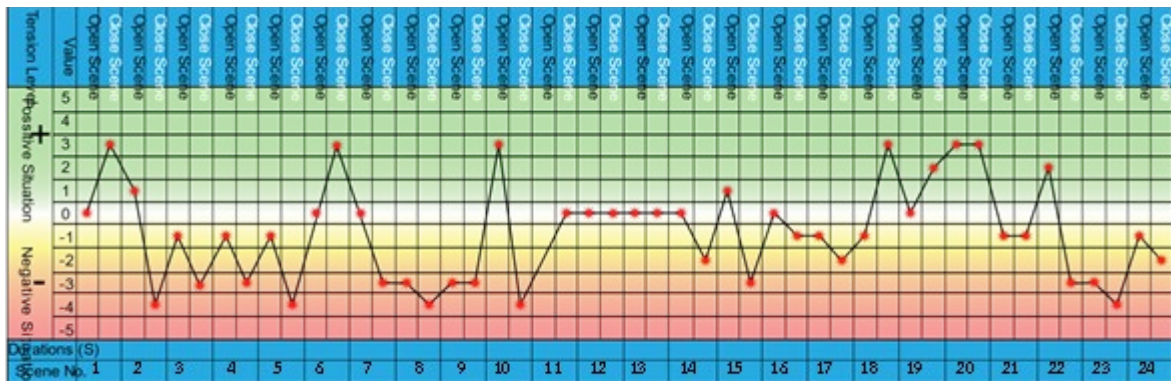


Figure 4 Tension graph in the screenplay for Ratree, scenes 1-24

It can be seen that between scenes 11-13, there was no movement in the graph, either going up or down, showing no development in the story. Therefore, writers can easily check and edit by adding positive or negative situations based on their imagination. On the contrary, in scenes 28-30, 33-34, 46-47, and 49-50, even if the points are not at zero, meaning normal situation, it does not mean that the situations are good enough for the screenplay, it just shows that there is no development in those scenes. Thus, the writer needs to make some adjustments for the story to develop one way or the other.



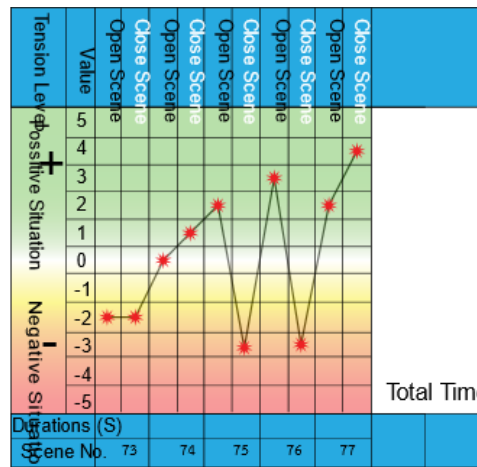


Figure 6 Tension graph in the screenplay for Ratree, scenes 1-77

The use of the screenplay principle that requires each scene to have an opening and a closed was to create an emotional value for the characters that will lead to bigger situations and create severe conflicts. Combining these scenes will create a sequent that communicates the meaning, and these sequents will combine into an Act with various meanings and conflicts, leading to the story's climax that will make the characters' emotions and situations in the beginning and the end of the story completely different.

Therefore, narrative graphs are very important to the story management for the plot, making the story more interesting and worth following through the mechanism of positive and negative values in determining the direction of the story for the characters to face challenges. On the other hand, the audience will also try to give moral support to those characters to overcome the obstacles.

It can be said that the steps and processes of writing screenplays consist of many considerations, such as determining the plot, the characteristics of the characters, and the situations the characters need to face. These components are crucial to interesting stories. If writers do not understand these steps and processes, producing screenplays with a good standard will be challenging. Therefore, determining and connecting the points on the narrative graph is essential for the screenplay writers to understand to be able to determine the plot and edits to produce a good screenplay.

Discussions of Results

The study entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratree was time to develop a screenplay adapted from the Novel Ratree, and the discussion of the results based on the objectives is presented below.

The Three Act Storytelling analysis consists of the following.

Act 1, Setup or introduction, is an opening for the audience to gain access to the characters in terms of the characteristics, situations that the characters need to face, social and environmental context, and inciting incidents that push the characters to the difficulties in life until they have a second thought and decide to do something for the story to progress. Acts 2, confrontation or build, where characters face obstacles, one after the other, while continuing to live their lives until they reach the midpoint or the turning point in their lives where they need to make a decisive decision to choose their own fate, which can lead to more disasters and force the character to be in a crisis. Act 3, resolution or payoff, is a climax of the results from earlier decisions to resolve the biggest problem the characters have, as well as a wrap-up, or conclusion, of what happened from those decisions in the end.

Using Three Act Storytelling to determine the plot aligns with Zhicheng Zhao and Xiaojuan Ge (2010), who stated that Three Act Storytelling proved efficient in real screenplay writing environments, especially ones that appeared in historical Greek dramas to successful present-day Hollywood. This concept determines the conceptual framework in laying out the plot in each act to be connected and related, logically linked to one another, and can be adjusted to be more appropriate. The concept aligns with Hanchanawong (2018), who stated that using Three Act Storytelling to arrange the situations before and after to communicate the intended point and draw the connection between those situations to be more logical and smooth. This point also aligns with (Seger, 1992, as cited in Hanchanawong (2018), stating that the concept of creating the second original and integrating plot and subplot in an adapted screenplay is a selection process from the surrounding stories to search for the hidden emotional event to be developed into screenplays. The narrative analysis in the novel *Ratree* used the Narrative Theory that consists of plot, characters, conflicts, settings, points of view, and special symbols. Even though the Three Act Storytelling narrative analysis overlaps with the plot analysis, a component within Narrative Theory, and might be seen as redundant analysis, the Three Act Storytelling emphasizes the development of storytelling with narrative graphs. In contrast, Narrative Theory emphasizes rising actions, conflicts, climax, falling actions, and ending. The ending itself consists of happy ending, tragic ending, realistic ending, and surprise ending, which is more concrete and more beneficial in developing interesting plots. This concept aligns with James E. Cutting (2016). Who identified that the use of Narrative Theory for writing and analyzing screenplays has a long history and has been perfected over the past decades. The above development results in a highly efficient form that can help process complicated stories quickly and accurately. The last step is adapting to a screenplay and creating the tension evaluation form by using the situations in the screenplay for *Ratree* to create narrative graphs by

determining the value for each opening and closing scene. The graph was then used to revise the plot and maintain the characters' tension for the story to be more intense, which aligns with Manomaiphikul (2022), who stated that the development of the story requires clear characters' objectives, a through-line of action, dramatic actions, and dramatic tensions to continuously increase the intensity of the story while maintaining the original plot of the novel. However, events, situations, and conflicts can still be added to be developed into a shooting script in the future.

Suggestions for Future Research

The study entitled A Study of an Adaptation of an E-San Novel to Screen Play: A Case Study of Ratreer aimed to develop a screenplay adapted from an E-san novel, Ratreer, by studying Ratreer, an E-sam Novel that won the Young Thai Artist Award in 2007 by Siam Cement Group Foundation using the Three Act Storytelling and the Narrative Theory as a conceptual framework in producing the film, Ratreer. The suggestions for future studies are as follows.

1. Using Post-Modern Theory, Realism Theory, and Magical Realism Theory for the analysis and interpretation, which should help change the plot, character, situations, and other aspects to be different from the novel.
2. Design the plot development by determining the points joined using a line. This research used situations as determinants. Future research can use the characters' emotions as determinants of positive and negative situations for the characters, which might create differences from the original story.

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