

**Mascelli's functional analysis of camera angles versus  
viewers' interpretations of unconventional camera angles  
in *Avatar* and *The English Patient***

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Mini-dissertation submitted in **partial** fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree **Masters in Communication Studies**  
at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

Supervisor: Prof AM Gerber

May 2014

**MASCELLI'S FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CAMERA ANGLES  
VERSUS VIEWERS' INTERPRETATION OF  
UNCONVENTIONAL CAMERA ANGLES IN AVATAR AND *THE  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **MASCELLI'S FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CAMERA ANGLES VERSUS VIEWERS' INTERPRETATIONS OF UNCONVENTIONAL CAMERA ANGLES IN AVATAR AND THE ENGLISH PATIENT**

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The primary research strategy of this study was to elicit meaningful answers from viewers by means of a focus-group procedure; this is a method associated with qualitative research (see Creswell, 1998; Berg & Lune, 2011) The group consisted of ten adults, whose visual literacy in terms of narrative films, was described as high (they frequently watch films at home, or in the theatre). The researcher acted as the moderator; and a set of semi-structured questions, based on meanings attached to camera-angle codes as defined by Mascelli, were answered by the participants.

The codification scheme of Mascelli was applied to the unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. These were compared with the viewers' responses. Finally, the results were interpreted, in order to establish whether a meaningful relationship exists between the viewers' responses and the interpretation of unconventional camera angles by such a seminal figure as Joseph V. Mascelli. The literature study focused on a media aesthetic explanation of cinematography, which included media aesthetics theory, framing, and composition, as well as the general codes and conventions relevant to cinematography.

The literature overview includes a study of books, academic articles, internet sources, legislation, and training videos. A Nexus and EbscoHost search (Academic Search Premier and Jstor) was conducted on cinematography in general, and on camera angles in particular.

Chapter 5 indicates the viewers' overall interpretations of the unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The graphs in Chapter 5 indicate that the viewers found the unconventional camera angles used in the films to represent the meaning of the shots appropriately, and that they understood why each

unconventional camera angle had been used. The viewers' responses correspond with the meanings of the unconventional camera angles, as stated by Mascelli.

To ensure the effectiveness of a film and the accurate representation of the meanings of camera angles and camera sizes, the way it is described by Mascelli should ideally be taken into consideration by all future producers. Mascelli's descriptions of camera angles and camera sizes, combined with the media aesthetics, as described by Zettl – when successfully applied – could lead to the production of a good quality film and images within the film.

**KEYWORDS:** *Avatar*, *The English Patient*, James Cameron, Anthony Minghella, motion pictures, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, production techniques, media aesthetics, cognitive theory, visual literary theory, focus groups, camera angles, Joseph V. Mascelli, Herbert Zettl.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION, CONTEXTUALISATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

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#### 1.1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The concept of film has been around since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was first seen as a novelty; but it has developed so much over the years that today, it is “one of the most important tools of communication and entertainment. Motion picture films have had a substantial impact on the arts, technology, and politics” (Filmbug, 2012).

Media aesthetics have been developed for over a 100 years. These different techniques form the basis of ‘film construction’ (also known as ‘film language’ or ‘film grammar’). The different production/creative techniques that all filmmakers have employed over the years are still important in the film industry today.

The media aesthetics/production techniques of a film affect the film in such a way, that without it, the film would not be able to portray the meaning behind the story of the film. The media aesthetics of a film comprise elements, such as lighting, editing, camera techniques, and sound (The Princeton Review, 2012). Each of these elements has a specific effect on the other elements, as well as on the end-result of the film. “Effective understanding and use of media aesthetics can determine whether images and sounds presented on a media display screen will be recognised and understood – in the manner – and with the emphasis intended” (Fullerton College, 2011).

According to Herbert Zettl, “media aesthetics, on the other hand, can be successfully applied – not only to analysis, but also to synthesis – in the creation of screen events, such as movies, television shows, and various forms of Web displays” (Zettl, 2005:366). Media Aesthetics in Zettl’s framework examines five basic aesthetic image elements that provide the aesthetic *material* – the raw material – of television, film, and computer-generated images, namely: light and colour, two-dimensional space, three-dimensional space, time-motion, and sound (Zettl, 2010:x).

Media aesthetics have emotional and intellectual effects; this then helps to construct the purpose of a specific shot or sequence of shots in a film. An example of this

would be the different types of lighting that can be used to produce a specific effect, such as emotion in a scene (Film studies program, 2002).

These techniques have no function if there is no *auteur* (author) who can decide how to best use each of the different techniques. An *auteur* could be defined as a producer or director whose individual style and management of pre-production, production and post-production elements give a film its personal touch (see Mamer, 2009). (In a practical sense, the director, with the assistance of the director of photography, literally “calls the shots” in a film). It could also be seen as ideological formalism; it is primarily concerned with style, and how it communicates ideas, emotions, and themes (SCCS, 2012).

Production techniques/media aesthetics can be divided into different parts, such as: *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound (UCMO, 2012). These techniques are systematically explained by the five dimensions of media aesthetics: light, two-dimensionality, three-dimensionality, time and motion, and sound (Zettl, 2010: ix).

Each of these dimensions can be intertwined with the others, which helps to create the overall effect, as well as the end-result of a film. Any dimension can be used in various ways to create a specific feel to a film, which then places the film in a specific category, such as “classic Hollywood cinema, the American independent movement, the New American independent movement, the new queer cinema, and the French, German and Czech new waves” (SCCS, 2012; UW, 2012).

Researching the level of agreement between the intention and the perception of a production technique requires a statement of intent by the filmmaker, on the one hand, and the assumption that a certain level of filmic literacy exists amongst the viewers, on the other hand (Burch, 2005). Unless the director and cinematographer explain why they have used, for example certain lighting effects or particular camera angles, a researcher must turn to the established meanings associated with the use of these production techniques. These meanings exist as codes or conventions (Davis, 1960); and viewers have learnt to interpret them since the beginning of film.

The codes of cinematography (camera work) have been developed and described by various experts and academics. A seminal contribution in this regard is “The Five C’s

of Cinematography" by Joseph V. Mascelli (Mascelli, 1998). One of these C's is camera angles.

Unconventional camera angles refer to framing principles or codes that may be described as orthodox, e.g. slightly below or above eye level. An extreme low camera angle (worm's eye-view), for example, is unconventional and unorthodox. It is only used in special circumstances to convey a specific meaning. This may be instability, fear, dynamic action, authority, or even insanity.

These codes and conventions have not changed over time, the technical execution of media aesthetics has, however, improved significantly since the beginning of motion pictures more than a hundred years ago. Film codes and conventions can be described as follows: The camera work is the code; and the convention is what the camera work implies or represents. Film codes and conventions are "similar to Genre, in the sense that there are certain rules (or codes) that must be followed, in order for the audience to assign a common reading or meaning (thus creating conventions)" (Mrsrobertsmedia, 2012). (Kindly refer to Chapter 2 for more details on codes and conventions.)

The first films created were black and white, as well as silent films. Live musicians accompanied silent films, so as to contribute to the mood or events of the film (Filmbug, 2012). From the first films – where a static camera captured all the action in one shot – longer films with shots and scenes subsequently developed (Orkut, 2012).

This led to standardised shot sizes and framing principles of composition, as well as conventions regarding camera movements and cutting (editing) codes. These developments required new and specialized cinematographic skills, and the early camera operators were replaced by professional cinematographers who – in addition to complex handling operations – were given intricate tasks, such as to shoot for movement continuity (Miller, 1999). Although film continuity is finalized in the cutting room, this would not be possible if the cinematographer could not shoot action that is continuous in time and place.

The essential function of the below-the-line (technical) aspects of a film is to convey meaning; and as such, this is an integral part (with e.g. story and acting) of a film's

grammar. These aspects include lighting, editing, cinematography and audio (The Princeton Review, 2012). They function as a system; and the effect of one would affect the others. Together, they help to generate information and emotion. The dramatic effect of a very low angle camera shot is, for example, enhanced by a directional low-angle hard-light source.

Over time, filmmakers have realised that camera placement can create its own drama and emotional effects. The *point-of-view shot* was an immensely significant development in film. Point-of-view can be defined as a shot taken with the camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, showing what the character would see (Elder Laboratory, 2012; Bordwell, 2012).

Take for instance the informational and dramatic value of reverse-angle shots. This technique shows both parts of the action that is taking place, at the same time, by focusing on one of the actors, and then moving to the other actor. This helps to tell the story to viewers in an easier and more understandable manner, without the viewers wondering what the other actor is doing.

As mentioned before, the *auteur* plays a vital role throughout the whole production process; and it is this functionary that eventually casts the meaning that is portrayed by the combination of technical aspects, such as lighting, cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, editing and audio. The auteur must make sure that the camera angles, the lighting and all the other techniques help to portray the message of the scene, as well as indicating which character drives the narrative. The auteur also advises on the final colour of every scene, adding frigidity or warmth to a scene, in order to enhance the emotional undertone of the scene.

Given the growth and popularity of production techniques in films, the question arises as to how valuable or crucial these production techniques truly are in the success of a film or scene, and how they are to be applied.

What is the relationship between the auteur and the viewer then? Do viewers of a film understand and interpret the different production techniques, such as conventional and unconventional camera angles in the way the director intended them to be interpreted? The research will attempt to answer these questions.

## 1.2. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 1.2.1 General research question

How do viewers' interpretation of the functions of unconventional camera angles, such as those employed in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*, compare with Mascelli's functional analysis of such angles?

### 1.2.2 Specific research questions

1. What are the functions that Mascelli attaches to the use of unconventional camera angles in a film?
2. What functions do unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient* serve for a group of viewers?

## 1.3. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### 1.3.1 General objective

This study will draw a comparison between how viewers in a focus group see the functions of unconventional camera angles, in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*, with Joseph V. Mascelli's functional analysis of camera angles in general, and unconventional camera angles in particular.

### 1.3.2 Specific objectives

1. This study will employ Joseph V. Mascelli's functional analysis of camera angles as its theoretical and analytical framework, in order to determine the communicative conventions associated with these angles.
2. This study will establish by means of a focus group the functions that viewers ascribe to unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*.

## 1.4. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

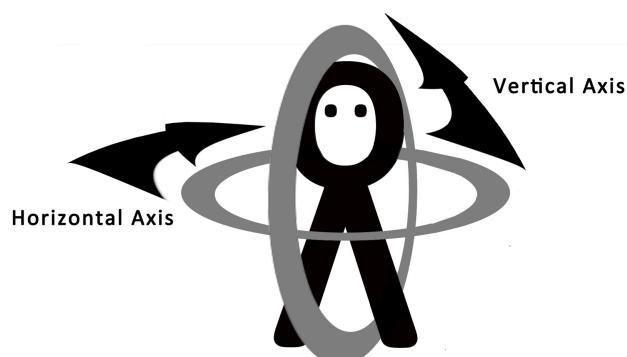
This study could be conducted within the context of several theoretical approaches, e.g. cognitive theory (Williams, 2005), visual literacy theory (Burch, 2005; Messaris & Moriarty, 2005), and semiotics (Moriarty, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, media aesthetics have proven to be a reliable and valid basis for the explanation of audio-visual production variables (Denton, 2005; Zettl, 2005, 2010). Camera angles fall within the second and third dimensions of media aesthetics; and as such, they cover the two-dimensional area, the interplay of graphic forces within the two-dimensional area, and depth and volume within the three-dimensional space (see also Mascelli, 1998; Ward, 2003; Yale University, 2002).

The codification scheme of Mascelli is not only based on these dimensions; but it also provides a systematic framework of analysis that will be employed in this study. This scheme involves a distinction between conventional and unconventional camera angles. Both involve shot size (the amount of space a graphic mass fills the screen, e.g. close-up, medium shot, long shot) as well as perspective (the location of the graphic mass in relation to the frame, for example, high angles, low angles, point-of-view, Dutch tilt).

Conventional camera angles combine different shot sizes with an “eye-level” (more or less) perspective; while unconventional camera angles juxtapose shot sizes with perspectives that deviate significantly from the eye-level viewpoint.

The differences can also be expressed as variations in the horizontal and vertical dimensions of a shot. Horizontal refers to a 360-degree axis going around a graphic mass. Vertical is a 360-degree axis stretching from the bottom to the top of a graphic mass. Although shot size (graphic mass) plays an important communicative role, the difference between conventional and unconventional angles is mainly determined by variations on the horizontal and vertical axes (Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1** The horizontal and vertical axes of camera angles

These variations (how the viewer perceives them) are further influenced by other factors, such as for example, the lighting angle and the way different lenses handle the relationship between the foreground, the middle ground and the background.

### 1.5. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With no production notes available by James Cameron (*Avatar*) and Anthony Minghella (*The English Patient*), the two films will be analysed within the theoretical cinematographic model of Joseph V. Maselli; while a group of viewers will be asked to interpret the unconventional camera angles that Maselli's framework has established.

The primary research strategy of this study will be to elicit meaningful answers from viewers by means of a focus-group procedure. This is a method associated with qualitative research (see Creswell, 1998; Berg & Lune, 2011). The group consisted of ten adults, whose visual literacy in terms of narrative films may be described as high (they frequently watch films at home or in the theatre).

The researcher acted as the moderator; and the questions were based on meanings attached to camera-angle codes, as defined by Maselli.

The codification scheme of Maselli was applied to the unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The results were then compared with the viewers' responses. Finally, the results were interpreted – to establish whether a meaningful relationship existed between the viewers' responses and the interpretation of unconventional camera angles by a seminal figure, such as Joseph V. Maselli.

The literature study consists of the camera angles, as described in "The Five C's of Cinematography" by Joseph V. Maselli (Maselli, 1998). It explains each camera angle in short, in order for it to be applied to the Chapter 5 – Viewers' interpretation of unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. Zettl's book "*Sight, sound, motion – Applied Media Aesthetics*", is the main source used to explain media aesthetics, as well as how to structure two-dimensional shots, how to create three-dimensional illusions and visualisation, and the building of screen space.

Articles by Hans-Peter Sätselli, Ruud Zandbergen, Ralf Speek, Michiel Peterkamp, Ilonka Maathuis, Rasmus Wienemann, Jason Scott Hutchens, and many other authors on camera angles, were used as the supportive literature. EbscoHost, Sabinet Online, and Pro Quest were used as databases to determine whether this study had been done on a previous occasion about *Avatar*, *The English Patient* or Mascelli's views on camera angles. Each database gave no results on *Avatar*, *The English Patient* or Mascelli's views on camera angles, or on any combination of the three.

### **1.6. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

The quality of a film is strongly determined by its camera angles, and the storyline remaining strongly positioned thereby. The message of each scene is also supported by the camera angle; and this can totally determine whether the scene and storyline are carried forward. The successful application of camera angles in films is recognised through awards, such as the Oscar for Cinematography. It is, however, not only a panel that should have this view, it is even more so the audience; the viewers themselves should feel this way.

It is thus important to understand whether the audience shares this view with regard to award-winning films. If it is found that they do, then it is important to understand whether the experience of each scene is as it was intended to be, as tested against Mascelli's theory. Should this be found to be true, then one can extrapolate to the conclusion that the current application of Mascelli theory by cinematographers can and should continue.

### **1.7. CONTENT STRUCTURE**

**Chapter 1:** Introduction, contextualisation and problem statement

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the background and context of the study, as well as introducing the problem statement, the contextualisation and the research methodology used in this study.

**Chapter 2:** Cinematography and media aesthetics

**Chapter 1: Introduction, contextualisation and problem statement**

Chapter 2 provides background information on how the film was created, as well as the cinematographic concepts used in the film. This chapter also explains cinematography within the framework of media aesthetics.

**Chapter 3:** Mascelli and the meaning of camera angles

Chapter 3 explains the meaning of the various camera angles, as stated by Joseph V. Mascelli, who is considered to be an authority in this area of the film industry.

**Chapter 4:** Research methodology

Chapter 4 provides an explanation of the research methodology used in this study, which is Triangulation: with a literature study, focus groups and questionnaires, as the three methods.

**Chapter 5:** Viewers' interpretation of unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*

Chapter 5 provides the viewers' interpretations of unconventional camera angles, such as those used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*, based on the outcomes of the focus-group discussions and the questionnaire responses.

**Chapter 6:** Findings, conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion of the findings in this study; and it also provides recommendations on these findings.

**Bibliography and Annexures**

## Chapter 2

### CINEMATOGRAPHY AND MEDIA AESTHETICS

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*“The motion picture camera employs the basic principles of still photography. The fundamental difference lies in the fact that while the still camera is designed only to print a single image on the film at each exposure, the motion picture camera is built to effect multiple successive exposures, thus accomplishing a photographic breakdown of motion”*

(Souto, 1969: 13).

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Souto’s idea of multiple successive exposures can only be achieved when a director selects particular shots or scenes to create the visual imaging. Each shot is selected carefully, so as to create a visual experience for the viewer. The director makes the decisions as to how much of the scene the viewers should see. The director determines the viewpoint of the camera, which then becomes the viewpoint of the viewer.

The director also determines which production techniques should be used during the scene to create the particular “feel” of the shot. The skilled director uses a camera and a microphone to create an impression of reality for the audience. These images create an illusion (Millerson, 1989: 172).

Each shot is carefully considered, in order to create an interest for the audience, and to steer their attention in the right direction. Their attention must be with the action that is taking place in the shot – and not on the surroundings, which have no purpose. Their attention must be focused on the importance of the shot, and not stray.

The director/cameraman is seen as the creator of a shot. The director/cameraman can only achieve an interesting shot when the sequence is edited in full, and when sound is added. The audience’s attention will roam if the only thing that is essential

in the scene is the subject; when there is no proper editing done, or when no sound has been added, to match the scene. Thus, it is very important to hold the attention of the audience – by presenting the subject in an interesting manner.

Another important instrument (medium) in creating visual images is the camera. The camera portrays a particular viewpoint: that of an onlooker, which is seen as the objective viewpoint; or at times, it can even be the subjective viewpoint. The subjective viewpoint is how the viewer sees it. It shows what a person would see if s/he were moving around in the scene. The camera can also be seen as an observer, which creates another perspective. This is when a variety of viewpoints is used to indicate what is happening in a scene (Souto, 1969).

As important as it is to know what needs to be shot and how, it is just as vital to know the camera. The different mechanical units in the camera make it possible for the cameraman to produce the image needed for the specific scene. Each component of the camera plays a vital part in crafting the right composition, as well the focus of a shot. Production techniques would not be able to achieve the desired result if these components did not exist. The camera can only do so much to create the correct shot or scene. The rest lies in the hands of the *auteur* and his team (Souto, 1969).

It is essential for filmmakers to learn how things work on a set, and how to frame each shot. Without this knowledge, a film would not be a success. Each film and television programme shares a common visual grammar (Ward, 2003: 2). “This visual grammar [has] evolved over time, through practical problem-solving on a set, at a location, or in an editing booth. This body of visual recipes is sometimes called invisible technique or continuity editing; and it [has] evolved [since] the very beginning of film making” (Ward, 2003:2).

This chapter will apply the theory of media aesthetics to the visual grammar, as it pertains to cinematography. In this sense, the aesthetic dimensions of two and three dimensionality are extremely important. However, the concept of applied media aesthetics in general will also be addressed, as well as the relevant research conducted on the general effect of camera angles on viewers.

## 2.2 CINEMATOGRAPHIC CONCEPTS

There are a few prominent phrases that one needs to know, understand and be skilled with when making a film, such as the shot, the creation of invisible techniques, standard camerawork conventions, realistic representation, mechanical representation, the framing of a shot and composition. These phases should help to create the perfect film.

A film consists of “multi-positioned viewpoints” (Ward, 2003: 4). These viewpoints are the building blocks for the film. Each shot contributes to the telling of the story. These individual shots are crafted to form a flow throughout the story, so as not to disrupt the audience while viewing the film. These viewpoints were developed over a number of years by the first filmmakers. They had to experiment with different methods of shooting and interesting ways of creating shots, in order to be able to determine the right method of filming a scene. Their experiments contributed to the way films are made today.

The technical aspects of a film can also be described as film codes and conventions. “It is similar to [a] Genre, in the sense that there are certain rules (or codes) that must be followed, in order for the audience to assign a common reading or meaning (thus creating conventions)” (Mrsrobertsmedia, 2012). In order to craft a film, the use of filmmaking tools, such as music, script, costumes, camera angles and framing, also known as codes, are utilised. Conventions are the ways that these tools are used; and they help the viewer to understand which characters are playing which roles in the story (Westone, 2013).

The combination of codes can determine the outcome of each shot, such as threatening music combined with dark shadows: to represent a thief or criminal entering a room. The combination of the low light and the music creates the conventions found in each shot. The way these codes are combined should help the viewer to understand the importance of each character in the film, and to decide whether they like or dislike a character (according to Westone, 2013).

Technical, audio, written, and symbolic are the various codes used to make it easier for the viewers to understand the film. Technical codes are the technical constructions of a shot or scene, such as the camera movement, camera angles,

lighting, and framing. These contribute to the creation of the images seen on the screen. The audio codes are the sounds heard on a film, such as the music, dialogue between the characters, and the sound effects. The written codes are the text or written words, which can be seen in some shots or scenes during the progress of the film. These written codes are headings and sub-headings, labels, signs and subtitles. All the things used in a film that might have symbolic meaning, such as use of colour, lighting, and the juxtaposing of various objects or people, can be considered as symbolic codes (Churchlands, 2013).

Conventions can be described as “the meanings derived from the codes used in a film. These conventions help the viewers to understand the meaning of each shot by providing more information on each shot shown. The combination of the various codes and conventions creates “a recognisable system of analysis” (Mrsrobertsmedia, 2013). The codes and conventions described here dominate all media studies. These codes and conventions can be found in still and moving images, such as film, television, print and photography. These codes and conventions are seen as the “recognisable forms of meaning” (Mrsrobertsmedia, 2013).

Realistic representation is used to represent happenings in “real life”, even though this has never happened. It is used to create the illusion of the progress of time. It helps to support the progress of the story, and the way the viewers interpret the story.

Mechanical representation is when the cameraman understands the visual elements of design for a shot, if he is to express the idea of the event, which is to be communicated to the viewers. Mechanical representation also indicates when the characteristics of the camera can be seen in a shot – and not those of the cameraman. It is particularly crucial for the cameraman to understand all the visual elements, in order to create the shot, and not to let the camera decide which images should be viewed in a shot (Ward, 2003: 8).

Framing a shot indicates what the shot is going to look like when filmed. It indicates what the viewers will see, and how much they will see. The composition of a shot is

when all the visual elements are taken into consideration to create a visually satisfactory image.

All these different elements can be seen as “production techniques”. The term production techniques consist of *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound (UCMO, 2012).

*Mise-en-scène* consists of décor, lighting, space, costume and acting. These elements effectively determine the mood or relationship between the different elements in the diegetic world (Film studies program, 2002).

The décor in a film helps to indicate the social differences between the different roles of the characters in a film. The décor helps to explain who and what the person is. The décor helps to set the mood for the scene, and for the viewers to be able to interpret the scene correctly. The décor can also create a contrast between the dialogue in the scene and what the characters are doing and want. It helps to highlight the emotion of the character.

Lighting means “the deliberate control of light and shadows, in order to fulfil specific aesthetic objectives relating to outer and inner orientation” (Zettl, 1990: 39). Light is the most indispensable element of visual design. “Apart from its fundamental role of illuminating the subject, light determines tonal differences, outline, shape, colour, texture and depth. Light is the key pictorial force in film and television productions” (Ward, 2003: 168; Roberts & Sharples, 1971: 59).

The manipulation of space is extremely important in a cinematographic sense. “Space is a complex visual component. It not only defines the screen where all of the other visual components are seen” (Block, 2001: 13). Space also contributes to making motion and movement in a film possible. It helps to show the change in time, and how people move in ways, such as physical movement and motions (Khatchadourian, 1987).

Space indicates the size of the subject in contrast to its surroundings. It creates the relationship between the sizes of the object in the shot when a three-dimensional object is flattened into a two-dimensional image (Ward, 2003: 49).

Block (2001: 2) relates space to three things: (1) The physical space in front of the camera when shooting; (2) the difference between the actual space where shot, and the same space as it appears on a screen; (3) the characteristics of the screen where we watch our pictures.

Space can be created by a deep or shallow focus; it all depends on what is being shot. The narration of the film will determine the use of the space in the shot. Using a wide-angle lens to transform a small room into a spacious room can produce space in a film. Space can make or break a shot. If the spaces between the main objects in the shot are indicated incorrectly, then the core aim of the shot will be lost, such as a build-up of tension. This means that if the action happens too fast or too slowly, then the tension the audience should feel or start to feel could well be lost (Film studies program, 2002).

Space determines the importance of the shot and the happenings in the shot. The biggest role player in creating space is the angle of the lens. A wide-angle lens would create the illusion of a major distance between the two objects: with one object in the foreground. A narrow-angle lens would show the two objects as being particularly close to each other - even if in real life they are not. A mid-range angle would illustrate a more realistic distance between the two objects in the shot. By making use of the angle of the lens, it is possible to shoot the same objects in a small space – than to have to move to a bigger, and more expensive location (Evers, 2013).

Cinematography consists of quality, framing, scale, and movement. These elements are essential to help construct a shot in a film. These elements help to create the “feel” of the film.

The look of an image, its balance between dark and light, the depth of the space in focus, the relation between background and foreground determine the quality (Film studies program, 2002). The quality of the film can be based on the “colour, contrast, deep focus, shallow focus, depth of field, exposure, racking focus, rate, telephoto shot, [and] zoom shot” (Film studies program, 2002).

Framing gives the filmmaker the opportunity to define only those elements that are mentally and emotionally required for his/her purpose. The irrelevant elements can

then be ignored, allowing the camera to concentrate on the essentials (Roberts & Sharples, 1971:92). The framing indicates that the edge of the shot is seen as the frame of the shot. It cuts out certain parts of the shot, which are irrelevant, or should not be viewed at this point. Framing consists of the “angle of framing, the aspect ratio, the level of framing, the canted framing, the following shot, reframing, the point-of-view shot, and wide-angle lens” (Film studies program, 2002).

Shot-scale in film indicates the size of the object or image the viewers see. To make it easier for the viewers to recognise the image on the screen, the object needs to be filmed in proportion to the other objects in the image. This makes it easy to recognise the object and the purpose of the object in the shot. By making use of different sizes, objects can be shot to visually trick the viewers. This makes it easier to represent the situation in which a character is – without additional costs (PCC, 2013).

According to Ward (2003:77), “A composition can achieve an impact by introducing an indication of scale or size comparison...More attractive compositions can be achieved by using a high-angle position looking down.” When one object is near to another, then an association can be established to assist the viewer to understand the images. The closer a subject is to another, the easier a relation between them can be developed when the shots change, resulting in more or less of the objects being shown.

To be able to catch the viewer’s attention, the director changes the scale of the shot. The director then makes use of conventional camera angles. These are extreme long shot, long shot, medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up and extreme close-up (these elements will be explained in the next chapter).

Movement takes into consideration “space, tone, mass, colour and line, when creating an image” (Ward, 2003:55). Movement grabs the attention of the viewer and keeps while it takes place. If the movements in the film are too slow, then the viewers might lose interest in the film.

It can be a struggle for a director/cameraman to be able to create visually exciting images, as well as to shoot different images without the camera movement being noticed by the viewers (Ward, 2003:203). The invisible camera work indicates how the camera moves from point A to point B. Is it a smooth movement, or is it jumpy?

If there is a jump or glitch in the camera movement, then the audience will turn their attention away from the film and to the camerawork. This must be avoided at all times. The creation of “invisible” techniques was “achieved in the latter part of the nineteenth century” (Ward, 2003:4). The invisible techniques can be described as making use of continuity cutting, parallel-action cutting, by moving the camera with the action, and lighting the scene to create the mood.

These techniques make the flow between the various shots smoother and more unobtrusive – when moving from shot to shot. This creates the invisible technique, since the viewers would not notice the change between the various shots, as it flows, and does not hop, from one shot to the next. These invisible techniques were experiments in filming, such as when someone first decided to move the camera closer to get a close-up of the actor, or to put the camera in a moving object, in order to film the opening scene.

Camera movement must form part of the image, so as to support the content of the shot. It needs to be used at the right time and with the right action. If there is camera movement when the shot needs a stable image, then the purpose of the shot would be lost, and the attention would move once again to the camerawork. The camera movement needs to match the action that is taking place in the shot; and the right composition needs to be maintained throughout the shot (Ward, 2003:203).

Different camera movements provide different moods and create a certain atmosphere in a scene. If the wrong camera movement is used, then the “punch line” of the shot would be lost. Camera movements consist of different elements, such as a crane shot, hand-held camera (steady cam), pan, tilt, tracking shot and whip pan.

### **2.3 CINEMATOGRAPHY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF MEDIA AESTHETICS**

Dr Herbert Zettl taught at San Francisco State University in the Department of Broadcast and Electronic Communication Arts for 40 years. In 1966, he received the *California State Legislature Distinguished Teaching Award*; and in 2004, he received the *Distinguished Education Service Award of the Broadcast Education Association*. Dr Zettl also presented many papers on video production and media aesthetics for a variety of academic and professional media conventions. He is also one of the founders of the *Annual Visual Communication Conference*. Dr Zettl was also the

head of the *Institute of International Media Communication (IIMC)*. He was a producer-director at professional television stations, such as KPIX. Zettl is widely known for his publication on Applied Media Aesthetics: “*Sight, Sound, Motion: Applied Media Aesthetics*”.

He is also the author of “*Video Basics, Video Basics Workbook, and Television Production Handbook*” (VCQ, 2011).

Zettl is seen as the Guru in applied media aesthetics; and filmmakers and cameramen see his book, *Sight, Sound, Motion*, as the bible on understanding what works, and what does not work in film/video – and why.

### **2.3.1 Applied media aesthetics**

#### **2.3.1.1 Definition**

Zettl (2010:4) describes applied media aesthetics as follows: “**Applied media aesthetics** is not an abstract concept, but a process in which we examine a number of media elements, such as lighting and sound, how they interact, and our perceptual reaction to them.” He further states that “the media – in our case primarily video and film (including digital camera) and, to a lesser extent, Web images – are no longer considered neutral means of simple message distribution, but essential elements in the aesthetic communication system.” Zettl also states that the existing works of art are restricted by traditional aesthetics. Applied media aesthetics serves as the creation of various forms of media productions (Zettl, 2010:4).

#### **2.3.1.2 Applied aesthetics and contextual perception**

Contextual relationships are formed by the way people observe their world. Aesthetic experiences are a part of a person’s everyday life. People are constantly judging and assessing different events, which are taking place around them. These events are being judged by comparing each aspect of the event with another aspect or another event. For example, a car can seem to be moving very fast when it passes a very slow-moving car. Artistic creations are drawn from everyday life experiences, which serve as the raw material for artistic creations (Zettl, 2010:5; RU, 2013).

Each person applies aesthetics when s/he stabilises and simplifies his/her surroundings, in order to render them meaningful. People will find a way to order their surroundings into a foreground, a middle ground and a background. This would help the person to cluster certain event details together, to be able to form the object – no matter how close or how far the object is – into an understandable image. This can also help the person to determine the size, colour, form and type of the object they are seeing. When the person has stabilised their environment, s/he tends to select what s/he would like to focus on in that particular environment.

This selection illustrates how the person wants to see the world. These aesthetics can only be understood when they are put into the context in which they are created. “This type of **selective seeing** – frequently, but not too accurately called **selective perception** – is like selective exposure to information” (Zettl, 2010:6). This indicates that when a person examines his/her environment, s/he would choose things s/he would like to see, and in which, s/he is interested. The individual would then choose to ignore the things in which s/he is not interested.

Selective perception is different to selective seeing. Selective perception helps a person to stabilise the environment in a more automatic and spontaneous manner, such as shielding the person from seeing too many shades of a colour, such as white, when looking at a piece of white paper (Zettl, 2010:6; RU, 2013).

### 2.3.1.3 The power of context

What a person decides to do, and what s/he ends up doing – no matter what the situation – is guided by the context of the event. A person will react on a gut feeling, or on the knowledge of how the world should work, when a certain context presents itself. When a person reacts to an event on a gut feeling, this is called the aesthetic context. When a person, however, reacts to an event on the basis of his/her knowledge of how the world should work, then this is called the associative context.

Various factors, such as light, sound and colour can determine one’s emotional response towards a certain object or event. These emotional effects are seen as the aesthetic context with which a person is confronted. This implies that a person would react to a certain object or event in a predictable way, even if s/he knows that s/he is being manipulated by the circumstances. The aesthetic context can be applied to

video and film productions as well; it all depends on where the director/cameraman decides to place the camera, and/or the microphone, as well as the camera angle of field-of-view chosen for the shot. This would then force the viewers to share the same viewpoint as the director/cameraman, which can help the viewer change his/her way of looking at something.

Zettl (2010:8) describes associative context as something that consciously establishes and applies a code that determines how one feels about and interprets what one sees. This indicates that when one sees something, the surroundings and one's feeling towards it, would determine how one reacts. For example, when you see a sign stating 'Eggs for sale', but in the background you see cattle, then you would respond in a negative manner, as the surroundings do not support the sign (Zettl, 2010:8).

#### **2.3.1.4 The medium as structural agent**

The way a person reacts, the body language, and the manner in which the information is being communicated, will determine how that person receives the information. This means that the informant has become a part of structuring the message. This can be associated with various mediums, such as television or film. Television or film both play a vital role in distributing the message, as well as the shaping of the message to the viewers. Each message being communicated to the viewers through television or film has to be constructed in a manner in which they would be able to understand it, as well as to find the information useful. How the viewers receive and respond to the information forms a part of the applied media aesthetics (Zettl, 2010:11).

#### **2.3.1.5 Applied media aesthetics: Method**

All films or videos consist of darkness and brightness, substance and colour, form and place. Each element in a film must be inductively and deductively abstracted, in order to create the graphic elements that are the most appropriate to represent the shot. The deductive approach to abstraction is used to move from a photographic realism of an event to the essential qualities of the event. In the inductive approach to abstraction, the formal elements of a film or video are studied, and arranged to express the vital qualities of an event (Zettl, 2010:12).

### 2.3.1.6 Fundamental image elements

Zettl describes five fundamental and contextual image elements, which can be found in video and film:

Number	Image elements
1	Light and colour
2	Two-dimensional space
3	Three-dimensional space
4	Time/motion
5	Sound

Media Aesthetics helps to determine the fundamental purpose of the five image elements and their function within particular contexts, as well as how they make a person feel when presented. Media Aesthetics theory can be applied to media analysis, media synthesis, as well as to media events (the production process).

The lighting, found in a film, creates the images and the mood for each shot. Film consists of two types of time. The first time indicates the length of the film, and the second time is the result of the story or narrative. Motion indicates the movement of people or characters in the scene. Sound is an essential part of a film. Sound plays a narrative or direct storytelling role in a film; it can produce emotional involvement in the film; or it can tell the audience how to feel by making use of a specific type of music.

To be able to apply the fundamental image elements in a video or film, an idea must be created and moulded to fit the medium's technical and aesthetic production requirements. A thorough understanding of the media aesthetics should help a

person to select the most appropriate elements and techniques to help shape particular ideas (Zettl, 2010:13).

### **2.3.2 Structuring the two-dimensional screen**

#### **2.3.2.1 Aspect ratio**

Aspect ratio can be defined as "the width of a picture (or screen) in relation to its height. Ratios are expressed in the form "width x height". For example, a 4x3 ratio means the picture is 4 units wide by 3 units high. Alternatively, a colon may be used (e.g. 4:3 or 16:9) or as a ratio to the number 1" (Media College, 2013). Converting between aspect ratios is practically impossible, because when trying to convert from a 16x9 to a 4x3, some of the picture would get lost, which could lead to a problem in the overall meaning of the shot. The screen itself is not flexible to aspect ratio change, but what is being shot is flexible within the screen (Zettl, 2010:81).

#### **I. Framing in the 4x3 aspect ratio**

A 4x3 aspect ratio makes it easy to frame a subject, because the difference between the screen width and screen height is not noticeable enough for the human eye to see. The 4x3 aspect ratio makes it easy to frame a vertical subject, as it would not be difficult to fill the sides of the screen. To frame a horizontal subject, there would not be too much wasted vertical space on the screen. The 4x3 complements a close-up shot and an extreme close-up shot, because it cuts in closer to the subject than does a 16x9 aspect ratio. A 16x9 aspect ratio leaves too much unused space next to the subject, which could distract the viewers from the main focus of the shot (Zettl, 2010:84; Shedworx, 2013, Lightpress, 2013).

#### **II. Framing in the 16x9 aspect ratio**

The 16x9 aspect ratio became part of film when film had to start competing with television to draw more viewers. Landscape sequences became more impressive when they were shot in 16x9 aspect ratio. The 16x9 format can help the director/cameraman to express the scene in a more functional manner, because of the wider screen, which could be useful when more information/events have to be a part of a specific shot.

When a dialogue is taking place between two characters on screen, they can stand more comfortably apart and seem more relax, than when they are being shot in a 4x3 format. The 4x3 format can make them seem too close to each other, or even cut a part of their heads off to make them still fit into the screen. Movies shown on a 16x9 television that has a different aspect ratio would have letterbox bars around them (Zettl, 2010:85; Shedworx, 2013; Media College, 2013).

### **2.3.2.2 Object size**

The size of an object on screen can be distorted. The only true way of determining the actual size of an object is by comparing it with a human figure. Other ways to also determine the size of an object are the size of the object relative to the screen size, the knowledge of the object, and the scale of the object relative to the screen size. When an object appears on screen, then the knowledge a person has of that particular object would automatically translate the screen image into the actual size known by a person, regardless of how it is represented on the screen.

When an object is shown on screen, and it is unknown to the viewer, then the size it occupies within the screen would help the viewer to determine the actual size of the object. When a viewer tries to determine the scale of an object, s/he would judge the object by comparing it with other objects in the screen (Zettl, 2010:93).

### **2.3.2.3 Image size**

The physical size of a video or film determines the way a viewer perceives and feels about the on-screen images. The way a viewer perceives the on-screen images can be influenced by the size of the screen. Large movie screens, as well as large HDTV screens favour landscapes more than people when presented. The landscapes can be shown as a feature in a scene on a large screen, because more detail of the landscape can be seen, which can create a sense of awe with the viewer. A small-screen video places more emphasis on the people than on the landscapes, as the people's actions supply the primary energy, the landscape in the background would be seen as merely incidental. The larger the screen in which the images are seen, the more aesthetic energy the images have (Zettl, 2010:97).

#### **2.3.2.4 Main directions: Horizontal and Vertical**

Horizontal and vertical space, are ways people perceive and structure events. Most of the things that a person does, happen in a horizontal state, such as sleeping, how you move about in the world, a horizontal place in the screen, as well as horizontal lines. These horizontal spaces can suggest calmness, normality, tranquillity and rest. Vertical lines can seem to be more dynamic, exciting and powerful than horizontal lines, but vertical lines are harder to manage. Most lines a person sees are a stable series of horizontal and vertical lines. Because of a person's ability to judge between vertical and horizontal, it is easier than to judge whether an image is straight or crooked: just by looking at it.

When an image is tilted in a scene, the viewer would immediately feel disorientated, as this disturbs its normal and upright position, and the viewer would immediately find a new or more stable reference to make the image seem upright. When a director/cameraman tilts the camera to shoot the image from a tilted horizon, it can cause the scene to seem unstable, or it could make an uninteresting building or object look dynamic (Zettl, 2010:103). "If it is indiscriminately applied to news or documentary productions, however, tilting the horizon often proves [to be] counterproductive. A tilted horizon will not liven up a dull interview, or help a wooden political candidate [to] get elected" (Zettl, 2010:105).

#### **2.3.2.5 Magnetism of the frame**

The magnetism of the frame means that the borders of the screen act as magnets; and if the subject or object is too close to the frame, it would look as if the frame draws the subject or object closer, and that gravity has been defined. The placement of the character or object within the frame would determine how the viewers perceive it. The magnetism of the frame can be divided into five groups:

Number	Group
1	Headroom
2	Pull of the top edge
3	Pull of the side edges
4	Pull of the entire frame
5	Attraction of mass

(Zettl, 2010:106)

**Headroom** can be described as leaving ‘breathing space’ between the top of the character’s head, and the upper screen edge, to counteract the pull of the upper screen edge and the lower screen edge. If too little space is left between the head and the upper screen edge, it would look as if the upper screen edge is pulling the head firmly against it. If too much space is left between the head and the upper screen edge, then it would seem as if the head is being pushed down into the lower half of the frame; and it would look awkward and unprofessional (Zettl, 2010:107; UV, 2013).

“In a close-up, the subject’s eyes are usually positioned 1/3 of the way down the frame, slightly off-centre (point 1 or 2 on the diagram above), which leaves little or no headroom. However, in a longer shot, emphasizing the background [rather than] the subject, it is acceptable to have more headroom” (UV, 2013).

**Pull of the top edge**, is when the pull of the upper screen edge is used to the advantage of the person or object being framed. The pull of the top edge would make the main image seem taller than it really is; or it would make the distance between an object and the ground seem further than it really is (Zettl, 2010:108).

**Pull of the side edges** can affect how two objects look when spaced on the screen. If the objects are placed too close to the side edges of the screen, then they might look too far apart when shot. This would create a secondary frame, and cause the centre of the frame to seem empty. Pull of the side edges is constantly present when

working with the 4x3 aspect ratio. The best way to solve this problem is to make use of over-the-shoulder shots or cross-cutting between the two characters. A 16x9 aspect ratio reduces the pull to the side edges, because it creates more space between the people and the screen edges. The pull of the side edges can be used on some occasions to the advantage of the image, for example, when the width of an object needs to be emphasised (Zettl, 2010:108).

**Pull of entire frame** is when an object is placed in the middle of the screen, which allows all four edges to pull at it. This makes the object seem bigger and heavier (Zettl, 2010:110).

**Attraction of mass** implies that the larger the mass, the larger the attraction power. All images that are shown on screen have a graphic mass. “The larger the graphic mass, the greater its attractive power. Also, a larger graphic mass attracts smaller ones, and not vice versa” (Zettl, 2010:110).

### 2.3.2.6 Asymmetry of the frame

The left and the right sides of any screen seem to have a different impact on the way a person views it. This also determines the meanings of how the viewers see a particular object in video, film and computer-screens. The viewer would ‘read’ the diagonal from left to right, when it is shown on the screen. When an uphill is shown from left (bottom) to right (top), it is perceived as if the object is being pulled up the hill. But when an uphill is shown from left (top) to right (bottom), then it is perceived to pull the object downhill (Zettl, 2010:111).

#### 2.3.2.6.1 Screen-left and screen-right asymmetry

Despite the controversy surrounding this aesthetic phenomenon, viewers tend to pay more attention to what is going on, on the right side of the screen, than to what is going on, on the left side of the screen. The high-energy source must be placed on the right side of the screen, as it is the main source of information. The asymmetry on the screen would also vary, as the size of the screen changes (Zettl, 2010:112).

### **2.3.2.7 Psychological closure**

Zettl (2010:116) describes psychological closure, as “One of our built-in survival mechanisms; [it] is our tendency to mentally fill in gaps in visual information to arrive at complete and easily manageable patterns and configurations.”

#### **I. Gestalt**

Gestalt means form, shape or configuration; this is a pattern that results from applied psychological closure. A gestalt is a ‘form’ created when a person creates a shape or figure out of various smaller shapes, in order to create an entity. “A gestalt is a perceptual whole that transcends its parts” (Zettl, 2010:117). A gestalt is often defined as “a whole that is larger than, or at least different from, the sum of its parts” (Zettl, 2010:117).

To be able to apply psychological closure, a minimum amount of information is required. If the minimum amount of information is not available, then the stimulus elements in the image will remain random, which would prevent a pattern from being formed (Zettl, 2010:118).

#### **II. High- and low-definition images**

A high-definition image is an image, which contains more pictorial information than a low-definition image. In a low-definition image, more closure is needed before a *gestalt* can be created. The constant need for the viewer to create closure of the images found in low-definition presentation will cause fatigue; and to deal with this, requires considerable mental effort (Zettl, 2010:118).

#### **III. Facilitating closure**

When making use of low-definition images, the picture elements must be grouped in such a manner that the images can easily be completed in the viewer’s mind. A low-definition image is only helpful if it facilitates, rather than inhibits, the closure needed for the image (Zettl, 2010:119).

### 2.3.2.8 Vectors

Zettl (2010:121) emphasises the importance of vectors as follows: "Probably the strongest forces operating within the screen are directional forces that lead our eyes from one point to another within, or even outside, the picture field. These forces, called vectors, can be as coercive as real physical forces. Each vector has a certain magnitude, or strength as to directional certainty and power. A **vector** is, therefore, a force with a [definite] direction and magnitude." A person running, things arranged in a line, or a person looking in a specific direction, can be seen as an indication on the screen as a vector. The actual screen motion can also be seen as a vector.

#### I. Vector fields

A vector field is when more than one vector is combined within a single field (frame). A vector can also be described as an aesthetic element, which leads the viewers into a specific space/time paradigm. Two type of vector fields can be found on screen: (1) External vectors; and (2) internal vectors. The external vector operates within or without the screen; while the internal vector operates within ourselves, such as empathetic responses towards the characters (Zettl, 2010:121).

#### II. Vector types

There are three principle types of vector:

1. Graphic vectors
2. Index vectors
3. Motion vectors

Graphic vectors are driven by the principle of continuity, which is "created by a stationary element that guides our eyes in a certain direction" (Zettl, 2010:121). A graphic vector is vague, because it does not provide a clear point of origin. A point of origin can be determined by looking at the line from left to right, and from right to left, which gives it directionality. An index vector is "created by something that points unquestionably in a specific direction" (Zettl, 2010:121). An index vector can be seen on screen when a person points or looks in a specific direction. A motion vector is when an object is moving, or is seen as moving, on-screen.

A motion vector would generally be the main focus of the attention, and it would override all other vectors in an image (Zettl, 2010:122).

### III. Vector magnitude

According to Zettl (2010:123), “The magnitude of a vector is a product of its relative strength, that is, its directional certainty, and [its] perceived directional force. **Vector magnitude** is determined primarily by screen direction, graphic mass, and perceived object speed.”

A one-way-street sign, someone pointing in a specific direction that has a higher magnitude than a line in a general direction, can indicate screen direction. The best screen direction vector is the motion vector, as its direction is visible.

The larger the graphic mass of the object, the higher its vector magnitude would be. A large graphic mass presents more directionality, and is more certain, which creates a higher vector magnitude than does a small object.

The perceived object speed is determined by how fast the object is moving, which would create a bigger vector magnitude. Vectors are context-dependent, like all elements of media aesthetics.

### IV. Vector directions

Index and motion vectors are elements of vector directions, which consist of continuing, converging or diverging elements. “Continuing vectors point in the same direction, converging vectors point towards each other, and diverging vectors point away from each other” (Zettl, 2010:124).

#### 2.3.2.9 Stabilising the field through distribution of graphic mass and magnetic force

“Every graphic mass operating within a clearly defined two-dimensional field, such as the video, film, or computer screen, carries a graphic weight, which is somewhat akin to the actual weight of an object. **Graphic weight** is determined by the dimension of the object (how much area the object takes up relative to the total screen area), its

basic shape and orientation, its location within the frame, and its colour" (Zettl, 2010:130).

An image shown on screen does not have to display all these elements; the size of an object is enough to give an image graphic weight. When two differently sized objects are displayed on screen, the viewers would then combine their graphic weight. The magnetism of the frame must also be taken into consideration. How close the object is to the screen edges must also be taken into consideration, when placing an object in the screen (Zettl, 2010:131).

#### **2.3.2.10 Stages of balance**

"Balance can range from, or fluctuate between, static (stable) and dynamic (unstable) field structures" (Zettl, 2010:136).

The stages of balance consist of:

Number	Stages
1	Static balance
2	Dynamic balance
3	Pushing dynamics
4	Unbalanced screen space

Static balance can be described as an object that is standing still; it is not about to move; and it is solid. Dynamic balance means that the graphic weight and the various vectors in the shot are no longer equal on both sides of the screen (Zettl, 2010:136). Pushing dynamics means that the image is overloaded with dynamics. In film and video, this usually does not last long; but it can be used to intensify an energetic or precarious moment. After this has been achieved, the dynamics would normally revert back to a more comfortable equilibrium (Zettl, 2010:139).

Unbalanced screen space is achieved when the pictorial elements in the shot are random and uncontrolled. Unbalanced shots can be used to grab the attention of the viewers, but they must be corrected as soon as possible, in order to create balance in the images again (Zettl, 2010:140).

### **2.3.2.11 Object framing**

#### **I. Facilitating closure**

For the viewers to be able to understand the images on the screen, the images have to be arranged into easily recognisable patterns of simple geometric figures. These images can be placed in a rectangular shape, a triangular shape, or in diagonal lines (Zettl, 2010:141).

#### **II. Graphic cues**

The chosen image for a shot will provide a guideline as how to best frame it for the viewers to still be able to create a full image in their minds. If the objects within the screen are cut-off incorrectly, then it would not be easy for the viewers to create a full image in their minds (Zettl, 2010:142).

#### **III. Premature closure**

“There are instances, however, in which improper framing can lead to ***premature closure***, which occurs when the vector field within the frame entertains such easy psychological closure that the image no longer compels us to extend it beyond the screen” (Zettl, 2010:142). This means that if the most necessary conditions for closure exist within the frame, the viewer would be able to create the full image in his/her mind.

#### **IV. Natural dividing lines**

The natural dividing lines of a person are: the eyes, the mouth, the chin, the shoulders, the elbows, the hemline, the knees and the ankles. For the viewer to be able to create closure of the image, the person has to be framed in such a way that the natural dividing lines fall either within or outside the screen edges. This would help the viewers to create the full image in their minds (Zettl, 2010:143).

## V. Illogical closure

Illogical closure can be described as a person forming patterns out of visual elements – even if the elements are illogical, and do not belong together: for example, a news broadcaster standing in front of a streetlight. The pole of the street light would seem to be growing out of the news broadcaster's head, because s/he is standing too close; thus the viewer would form an illogical closure (Zettl, 2010:144).

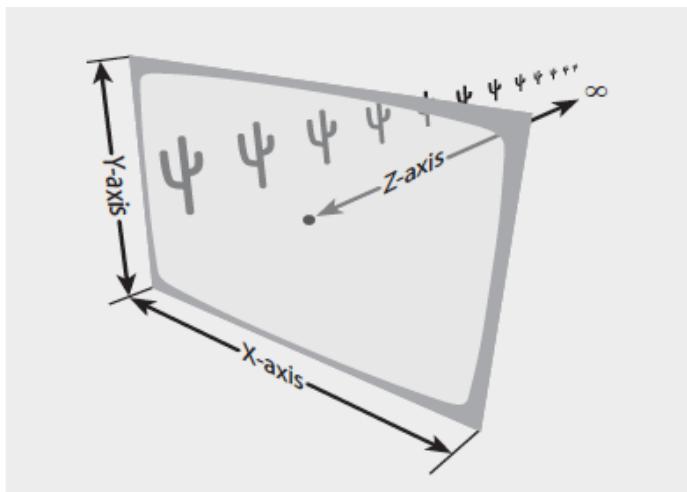
## VI. Unusual compositions

“Sometimes, under certain circumstances, unusual compositions will not only startle viewers and make them pay renewed attention, but also sharpen the message in a subtle, yet compelling, aesthetic way” (Zettl, 2010:144). Unusual compositions can be achieved by placing an object on the left of the screen, which leaves the right of the screen open for somebody to enter. Another way of achieving unusual compositions is by not placing an object in the centre of the screen, or by showing only a part of it on-screen.

### 2.3.3 Creating the three-dimensional (3D) illusion

#### 2.3.3.1 The Z-axis

“In the three-dimensional model, the z-axis is added, which describes depth. The z-axis value describes a point located away from the frontal plane – in our case, how far an object seems to be from the camera” (Zettl, 2010:155). The z-axis is the most flexible screen dimension in film; and it can be used to provide a three-dimensional image.



**Figure 2.1 The Z-axis (Zettl, 2010:156)**

Figure 2.1 describes how the z-axis is perceived in film, in video, and on computer screens. The z-axis forms from the screen and moves backwards, from the camera lens to the horizon (Zettl, 2010:157).

### 2.3.3.2 Graphic depth factors

Graphic depth factors are:

1. Overlapping planes
2. Relative size
3. Height in plane
4. Linear perspective
5. Aerial perspective

Overlapping planes comprise the most direct graphic depth to create 3D-illusions. When an object is partially covered by another object, it is clear that the one being partially covered is behind the object in front of it. The relative size of an object on the screen can be judged if the viewers know or can guess the actual size of an object relative to other known objects around it. “The larger a subject or an object appears, relative to the screen borders, the closer it seems [to be] to the viewer” (Zettl, 2010:159).

Zettl (2010:160) describes height in a plane as follows: "Assuming that no contradictory distance cues are evident, and that the camera is shooting parallel to the ground, you will perceive people and objects as being more and more distant they higher they move up in the picture field. This distance cue operates only until they have reached the horizon line."

The linear perspective creates images, which seem to get smaller (at the same ratio) the further they are from the camera/observer. The parallel lines which form, stop or disappear at the *vanishing point*. The vanishing point always lies at eye-level or camera level on the horizon (Zettl, 2010:161).

Aerial perspective indicates that the objects closer to the observer are more visible than the objects farther away, due to the moisture and dust in the air. When looking at various objects in the foreground and background, the colour of the objects will lose their density, the further away they are from the observer (Zettl, 2010:163).

### **2.3.3.3 Depth characteristics of lenses**

A lens has various optical characteristics, which can enhance or obstruct the illusion of the third dimension on the video or movie screen. The choice of lens determines the 'feel' of a screen event. Wide-angle and narrow-angle lenses have different depth characteristics. These characteristics influence the depth factors of overlapping planes, relative size, linear perspective, and aerial perspective.

The overlapping planes of a wide-angle lens look more stretched out along the z-axis; while the overlapping planes of a narrow-angle lens make the objects appear closer together along the z-axis (Zettl, 2010:164). A wide-angle lens exaggerates the relative size of an object, when the object is positioned closer to the camera. An object placed on the z-axis, just behind the front object, would look much smaller than the object in front, when it is shot with a wide-angle lens (Zettl, 2010:165).

If the same scene is shot with a narrow-angle lens, then the two objects would look much closer to each other, because the narrow-angle lens enlarges the background, which makes the back object seem similar in size to the front object (Zettl, 2010:166).

A wide-angle lens makes linear lines seem to join more quickly than a person would normally see this. And this makes the object seem stretched in the image, and the z-axis space appears to be extended (Zettl, 2010:166). A narrow-angle lens reduces the illusion of depth through the linear perspective, and gives a normal convergence of the parallel lines (Zettl, 2010:167).

A wide-angle lens portrays most of the objects in a shot as being in focus, which means that all the objects on the z-axis would be in focus. This means that the aerial perspective would be on everything in the shot – and not just on one specific object. A narrow-angle lens emphasizes the aerial perspective of a shot. This means that when a specific object is focused on, the rest of the objects in front and around it would be out of focus. A shift of the camera along the z-axis would then cause the focus to shift to another object within the shot (Zettl, 2010:168).

#### **2.3.4 Visualisation and the building of screen space**

“**Visualisation** means thinking in pictures or, more precisely, in individual shots or [in] brief sequences. It also means thinking about the sounds that go with your video production or film” (Zettl, 2010:203).

##### **2.3.4.1 Ways of looking**

It is important to decide very early in the shooting phase, how the event is going to be looked at, and how it is going to be shot. If a director or cameraman chooses to look into an event, rather than at an event, then the complexity and psychological implications need to be communicated in the best manner possible to the viewers. (Zettl, 2010:207).

Looking at an event is merely when the events are being reported, such as a news broadcast. When looking into an event, the various aspects of an event are communicated to the viewer. These details are usually overlooked by a casual observer. When a director/cameraman is creating an event, the technical devices and the potentials of the medium can be used to help build a unique screen event.

### 2.3.4.2 Field-of-view and point-of-view

Field-of-view is how close, or how far, an object or character is placed on-screen.

There are five designations of fields-of-view:

1. Extreme long shot (ELS)
2. Long shot (LS)
3. Medium shot (MS)
4. Close-up (CU)
5. Extreme close-up (ECU)

These five designations can also be viewed as camera sizes (Zettl, 2010:210).

Zettl (2010:212) refers to point-of-view as “the camera simulating the index vector of a particular person or persons on-screen.” The point-of-view shot can also be described as a specific character’s perspective. There is a difference between a camera’s viewpoint and the point-of-view of a character. The viewpoint of the camera refers to what the camera is looking at, and from which angle. The camera becomes narratively involved in the shot, when it is seen from such a point-of-view perspective (Zettl, 2010:212).

### 2.3.4.3 Angles

Zettl (2010:219) states that angles are created when the viewpoint of the camera is shifted. Angles can help to create effective screen space, such as continuity, multiple viewpoints, event intensification, and style setting.

The angle for continuity means that various shots are taken of the same scene, in order to make it easier for post-production. By changing the angle of a shot, this helps to create continuity when moving from one shot to another, so that no slight movement of the character or an object would be noticed (Zettl, 2010:219).

Angles for multiple viewpoints create changes in viewpoints, which then create directional shifts. The multiple viewpoints help the viewer to see an object or event from various positions. This, in turn, creates a more complete screen space (Zettl, 2010:220).

Angles for setting style can be determined by the technical and aesthetic requirements of the shot. The director/cameraman may choose to use other angles than those dictated by the technical or aesthetic requirements. The style the director/cameraman choose to employ, should not draw attention to itself, but should rather become merely another element of the aesthetic communication.

#### 2.4 RESEARCH ON THE EFFECT OF CAMERA ANGLES

Camera angles have various effects on how the viewer sees the image on-screen. An object or character shown from a low angle would be seen as more positive than an object or character that is shown from a high angle, which would be viewed as something negative. The high-angle shot would place the character looking down in an authoritative or dominant position. The low-angle shot would make the character looking up seem to be insignificant (InPoint, 2013). If the object or character is shown from an eye-level perspective, which creates a more face-to-face interaction with the characters, this would result in a visual equivalence.

Each camera angle provides different information of the shot; and this can be judged differently, depending from which angle it is shown (Speek, 2006). Making use of these various camera angles to represent a character, would determine how the viewers perceive the character. These camera angles can influence the personal and physical characteristics of how the viewers observe the character being represented (Sätteli, 2010). The camera angles are determined by where the camera is placed to shoot the events (InPoint, 2013). These camera angles can either be a bird's eye-view, a worm's eye-view, a high-angle, a low-angle, or an eye-level, in addition to Dutch-tilt shots and angle-plus-angle shots.

A camera angle can also determine how viewers respond to a certain product. If a product is viewed from a low angle, then the product would usually receive higher ratings from the viewers, than a product being viewed from a high angle (Peterkamp, 2013). This can also be applied to the social media. When a person is viewed from below, this person would then seem more dominant; but if the same person is viewed from above, then this person would seem more submissive (Zandbergen, 2011).

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

Media aesthetics in a film represents the way a director/cameraman looks at the elements around him/her, and how s/he interprets these elements. These are elements, such as light and sound, the media or form projected, such as video or film, and the analyses of the various forms of media production and their creations. The criteria of applied media aesthetics help the director/cameraman to evaluate the relative communication effectiveness in a step-by-step manner of the aesthetics and the production factors. The cinematographic concepts that are found in media aesthetics are the shots, the creation of invisible techniques, the standard camerawork conventions, realistic representations, mechanical representations, the framing of a shot and its composition.

These cinematographic concepts form part of the creating process of a film, combined with the media aesthetics necessary to create a perfect film.

The knowledge of media aesthetics and how cinematographic concepts are inter-related, would make it easier to understand the camera sizes and camera angles described in Chapter 3; and how these camera techniques can be used in a film.

Joseph V. Mascelli's: "*The Five C's of Cinematography*" will be used as the theoretical cinematographic model, in order to explain the various camera angles, and the camera sizes used in a film.

## Chapter 3

### MASCELLI AND THE LANGUAGE OF CAMERA ANGLES

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#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Joseph V. Mascelli served as a cinematographer during World War II with the U.S. Army. He shot various films for the U.S. Army, such as training films, technical films, and project reports. When a new U.S. Air Force was established in 1947, Mascelli was hired to become a civilian cinematographer for the Air Force, as well as a motion picture director.

His first job was to shoot the first H-Bomb test at Bikini Atoll. Mascelli's Hollywood career as a cinematographer consisted of various films, such as *The Street Is My Beat* (1966), *Strange Compulsion* (1964), *The Thrill Killers* (1964), *The Incredible Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies!!?* (1964) and *Wild Guitar* (1962). *Monstrosity* (1963) is a film, directed by Mascelli.

In 1965 Mascelli published his book: "*The Five C's of Cinematography*" which brought him famous acclaim. This book is still regarded as one of the classic texts on the subject (IMDb, 2013).

Mascelli has as the aim with his book to help the reader to become more aware of the fact that there is always more than one way of telling a story with film, as well as to explain to the reader how theatrical filming techniques can be used when filming a non-theatrical film. He also stated that the professional rules explained in his book could also be effectively applied to documentary films. The same rules apply – no matter what type of movie is being made. The ambitious filmmaker must, however, first learn these various rules on how to best film a specific scene or subject – before they can start breaking the rules. Knowledge must be applied when choosing a certain angle to shoot a specific shot, as it must adhere to what the audience wants.

Mascelli states in his book that there are two questions to ask when the camera is moved to a new location: "What is the best viewpoint for filming this portion of the event?" And, "How much area should be included in this shot?" (Mascelli, 1998:11) These questions help to intensify the dramatic visualisation of the story being told.

This draws the viewer into the scene and makes the viewer a part of the story, and helps the viewers feel that they can relate to the emotional or intellectual circumstances of the story. If the camera angles are not chosen correctly then it may distract the audience away from the meaning of the scene, and instead create a different meaning to the story. Thus selecting the right camera angles for creating a film is the single most important factor in cinematography.

The script plays a vital part when choosing the different camera angles. The script helps the director, as well as the cameraman, to understand the context of the scene, and to be able to choose the correct camera angle for each scene. A production designer helps to illustrate the various camera angles to be used in different scenes; and he does this by creating a series of sketches, which indicate the main incidents. These sketches help the director, as well as the cameramen, because the sketches suggest possible camera angles, which would help to tell the story from the best viewpoint.

### **3.2 CINEMATOGRAPHIC SHOT CONVENTIONS**

According to Mascelli (1998:24), a camera angle is the *area* and *viewpoint* recorded by the lens. The placement of the camera decides how much area is included, and also the viewpoint from which the *audience* observes the event. “It is important to remember the relationship between the camera angle and the audience. Every time the camera is shifted, the audience is repositioned, and observes the event from a fresh viewpoint” (Mascelli, 1998:24).

The camera angle determines both the audience viewpoint and the area covered in the shot. It thus becomes critical to carefully choose the camera angle, as it then can heighten the dramatic visualisation of the story. Should the camera angle be selected with insufficient care, it may distract or confuse the audience by depicting the scene, so that its meaning becomes difficult to comprehend. Therefore, according to Mascelli (1998:11), “Selection of camera angles is a most important factor in constructing a picture of continued interest.”

The concept, camera angle, involves perspective as well as size. Normally, the camera angles most often used in a film are shot from the subject’s eye level. This may be termed the ‘normal camera angle’. A typical scenario is where the lens itself

is on the same vertical (height) plane as the subject, i.e. the distance from the surface for the eyes and the lens is identical.

Should the person bend down and the lens remains on the same distance from the surface, the normal angle turns into a low-angle shot. If the lens tilts down to keep eye-contact with the subject, it is still a low-angle shot. Although the lens and the subject still see eye-to-eye, it is not a normal eye-level shot, because the vertical distances between the eyes and the lens are not the same.

If the camera is taken down with the subject, the normal eye-level angle prevails, because the change in the vertical distance remains constant. The operational definition of unconventional camera angles, therefore, refers to meaningful differences, especially in the vertical axis between the camera lens and the subject. These angles are used to create a specific feel or emotion to the scene, such as with low camera angles, high camera angles, bird's eye-views, worm's eye-views, and Dutch tilts.

For the purposes of this study, however, the normal eye-level camera angle will be discussed and analysed within the broader context of unconventional camera angles. This is necessary because of the permutations involved in the ever-changing spatial relationship between camera and object.

The conventionality of a camera angle can also be expressed in literal (representational) or non-literal terms. While the first conveys information about the content, perspective and relationships among graphic masses, the latter adds subjective meaning to the shot as well. In the case of the literal angle, the camera takes the place of the audience (Mascelli, 1998). The angle is usually shot from a side-line viewpoint.

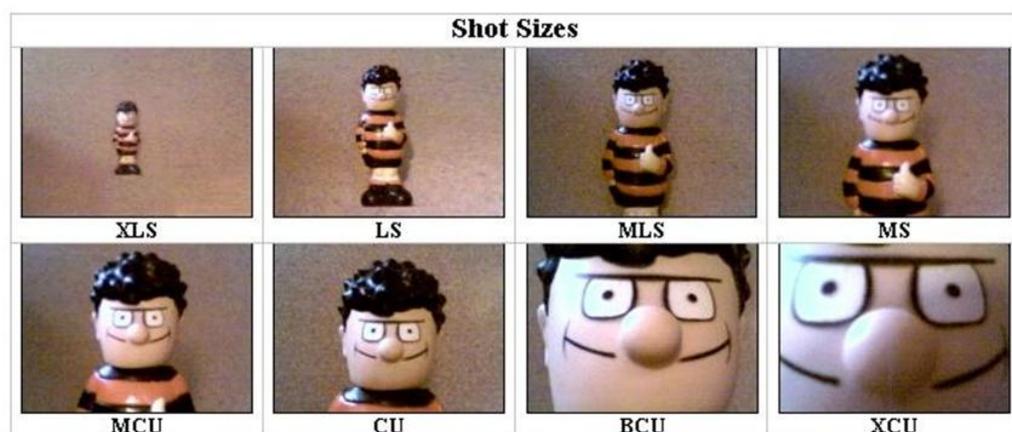
The audience experiences this viewpoint, as if they are intruding or eavesdropping on the scene. They then view the scene through the eyes of an unseen observer. This camera angle is impersonal, and the people being photographed appear to be unaware of the camera's presence; and they never look directly into the camera.

The non-literal or subjective camera angle may act as the eye of the audience. The viewer becomes a part of the action – either as an active participant, or seeing the

events taking place through the eyes of the character. An eye-to-eye relationship can be created with the audience if someone in the shot talks directly into the camera.

The point-of-view camera angles fall in-between an objective and subjective camera angle, since they record the scene from a particular player's viewpoint. "A point-of-view shot is as close as an objective shot can approach a subjective shot – and still remain subjective. The camera is positioned at the *side* of a subjective player – whose viewpoint is being depicted – so that the audience is given the impression they are standing cheek-to-cheek with the off-screen player" (Mascelli, 1998:22).

Any camera angle can be applied to any shot size. These shot sizes are codes and conventions that have been developed ever since the early years of film (see Davis, 1960). They are standardised internationally, and the most conventional of these are the extreme long shot, the long shot, the medium long shot, the medium shot, the medium close-up, the close-up, the big close-up, and an extreme close-up.



**Figure 3.1 Conventional shot sizes (Chandler, 2012)**

These sizes can be defined as graphic masses that fill a given proportion of the two-dimensional frame. The real size of the graphic mass (object size) does not necessarily have to be on scale, and it is up to the creator to supply clues to judge the real object size (see Zettl, 2013:100-103). It is in this sense that the screen area acts as a size reference; while the screen frame may act as a scale reference.

Regardless of whether it is the screen area as size reference or the screen frame as scale reference, an object has to be filmed from a certain perspective, i.e. the angle. The possibilities in this regard were illustrated with Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 and discussed earlier. Normal camera angles on the vertical axis are more or less “eye level”, while unconventional camera angles are high- or low-level shots.

The following discussion departs from the perspective that camera angles include both shot sizes and angles as variables, and that the eventual effect on the viewer may be determined by other variables, such as movement lighting, sound and acting.

The shot sizes that will be explained are extreme close-up, close-up, medium close-up, medium shot, long shot and extreme long shot; this is done because these sizes are connected to unconventional camera angles in the films discussed and in the questionnaires used in the focus group.

### **3.2.1 Extreme close-up**

These shots apply when tiny objects or areas, or small portions of large objects or areas, are filmed from an extreme close-up position, so that they appear much larger on the screen. Extreme close-ups are shots that help to create dramatic effects by shooting only a small portion of a person’s head, such as the eye, mouth or nose. Extreme close-ups are mostly used when the content of the scene warrants ultra-dramatic significance. This can help the viewer become more emotionally drawn into the character, and what is being experienced. An example could be when a character is having a epileptic attack, and the character’s eyes start rolling in the head and saliva is coming from the mouth.

The extreme close-up shot would then be focused on the eyes rolling, and in a separate shot, on the saliva coming out of the mouth. This would help to dramatise the action that is taking place (Mascelli, 1998:174; Farlex, 2012).

### **3.2.2 Close-up**

A close-up shot would require specific narrative emphasis to help emphasise the action taking place, and how important it is to focus on that specific action. A close-up shot is usually used to help portray the action that is taking place on a small

scale, such as a character building a machine; and the camera closes in on the hands to show what the character is doing. Close-up shots are very unique to motion pictures, as only motion pictures can portray a certain portion of the action that is taking place. Close-ups are used to eliminate all non-essential elements that could distract the viewer from the action that is taking place. This helps to transport the viewer into the scene, and thus become a part of the action that is taking place. Close-ups are seen as a very powerful story-telling device and must be used with the utmost care; and they should be reserved for the exclusive use of vital spots in the story (Mascelli, 1998:174; Mediaknowall, 2011).

### **3.2.3 Medium close-up**

This is a shot that frames the character from above the head to mid-way between the shoulders and the waist. A medium close-up helps the viewer to be a more intimate part of the conversation or the action that is taking place on the screen. A medium close-up is mostly used when a dialogue is taking place between two or more characters. It helps to portray the facial and body language, while the character is talking – such as the shoulder movement, posture, arm and hand gestures – and it can even show the breathing of the person. A medium close-up also helps to show the environment in which the characters are, and why the dialogue is taking place (Mascelli, 1998:174; Mediaknowall, 2011; Media College, 2013).

### **3.2.4 Medium shot**

A medium shot is a shot that frames the characters from above the knees up to the head, and even above the head. Medium shots are mostly used for dialogues between characters or small crowds. They help to portray the movements and body gestures, as well as the facial expressions the characters used in a scene. The body language the characters are representing is very important to help tell the story and to connect the dialogue with the scene. Most films are largely comprised of medium shots, as they place the audience at a middle distance from the characters. Medium shots are often partnered with long shots or close-ups. A medium shot is mostly used after a long shot has established the scene. A shot may return to a medium shot after a close-up shot to help re-establish the characters (Mascelli, 1998: 27; Ablan, 2003; Media College, 2013).

### **3.2.5 Long shot**

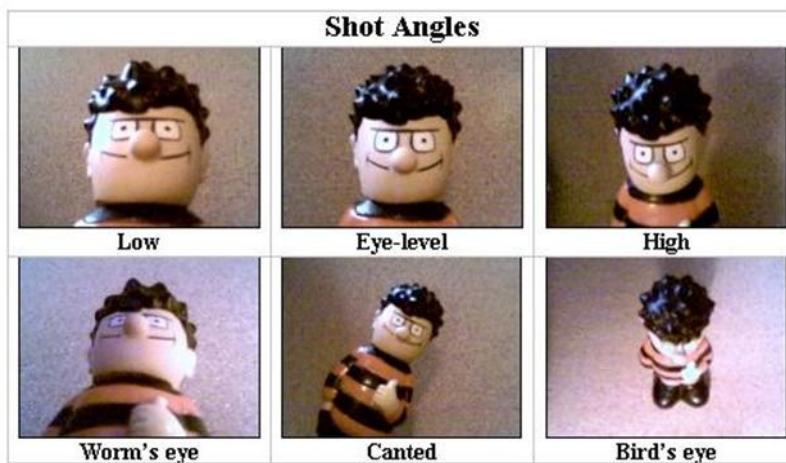
A long shot is a shot that helps the audience observe most of the action or scenery, as well as to establish the location. A long shot aims to inform the audience of the place, the people and the objects in the scene. A long shot can be used to indicate the change in location, or even to show the audience what the particular character is seeing or looking at. A long shot is most effective when extensive detail is shown of the location. A long shot lends scope to a picture, as it makes the setting seem bigger (Mascelli, 1998: 26; Media College, 2013).

### **3.2.6 Extreme long shot**

This shot can be used to impress the audience with the setting, or with the events taking place. An extreme long shot is a shot from a great distance – to show a big area, as well as to create an atmospheric impression. An extreme long shot can show various activities taking place at the same time, or activities that are taking place in a widespread area. A high vantage point, such as the top of a building, a hilltop, or from a helicopter or airplane, is one of the best places from which to film an extreme long shot. The audience can only survey the area being shown; and it is detached from the action that is taking place. An extreme long shot is used to put the audience in the proper mood for the action that is going to follow; and it is frequently used before introducing the characters and the storyline (Mascelli, 1998: 25; Mediaknowall, 2011; Media College, 2013).

## **3.3 A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CAMERA ANGLES**

Mascelli's viewpoint and explanations on the various unconventional camera angles are used as the theoretical basis. The unconventional camera angles that are explained are the eye-level, high-angle shots, low-angle shots, point-of-view, bird's eye-view, worm's eye-view, angle-plus-angle and 'Dutch' (canted) angle.



**Figure 3.2 Camera angles (Chandler, 2012)**

### 3.3.1 The eye-level camera angle

When a cameraman composes a shot s/he considers: (a) the size, and (b) the angle. The angle has a horizontal and a vertical axis. The closer to 90 degrees on the axis, the more normal or conventional the angle is, i.e. if we are seeing other people (objects) eye-to-eye.

In practical terms, a level-angle shot is when the camera films the shot from the eye-level of an observer who is of average height or from the subject's eye-level. The eye-level shot shoots the scene, so that the vertical lines in the shot do not converge. An eye-level shot does not make the shot as interesting as a high-level or low-level shot would do, but it is necessary to portray the images as vertical. It is usually used to make buildings and walls remain true to the original image.

There are two important types of eye-level shots, objective shots and subject's eye-level shots. The objective shot is usually filmed from the eye-level of an average person who is about 1.5 meters high. This is important to keep in mind when a shot is presented, as the observer would see it. A subject's eye-level shot is important to use when filming close-ups.

The best way to film the subject's eye-level is to make it seem like the person is on an eye-to-eye basis with the other person. This means that the camera must be

adjusted to the correct height of the person being shot. The eye-level shot helps to build an intimate relationship between the viewer and the screen player.

Eye-level shots are also presented with point-of-view close-up shots, when the two characters are of the same height, or approximately the same height. A subjective close-up is always filmed from the eye-level of the person being photographed. The person being represented must never look up or down at the camera, as this would make the relationship with the viewer awkward, and would fail to present the eye-to-eye level basis subjectively. Some eye-level shots can be more dramatic than an angled shot, such as a speeding car driving directly at the camera, causing more anxiety with the subjective viewer than a high-angle shot would do.

### 3.3.2. High-angle shot

A **high-angle shot** is when the camera is positioned to look down at the character or subject. A high-angle shot assists in showing the audience what is happening in the shot. A high-angle shot does not mean that the camera is always placed at a high level; it may be placed below the cameraman's eye-level to look down on a small object.

A high-angle shot can be seen as a character or the audience looking down at someone to imply the stature of the person looking down, or it can indicate that the character being looked down upon is lonely, or has a lack of power. It could also help the audience feel superior to a character when the camera is looking down at him/her; this helps to belittle a character.

Placing the camera at a high angle from the subject could result in a more artistic picture. It may also help the audience to easily keep track of the action that is taking place, or it could even influence the audience's reaction. High angles can help to break away from the normal eye-level shots, and could help to establish the story or influence the audience's reaction to the characters (Mascelli, 1998: 37; Cennamo, 2013; Media College, 2013).

### 3.3.3 Low-angle shot

A **low-angle shot** is when the camera is placed below the eye-level of the character being shot. It is not necessarily shot from a worm's eye-level, nor does it mean that

the camera was placed below the cameraman's eye-level. A low-angle shot is usually used to make the character being looked upon as more domineering, threatening or aggressive.

This shot also works very well with point-of-view shots (discussed in 3.4.3), as the audience can identify themselves with the lowly player (the one being looked down upon) and can then become more emotionally involved with the lowly player. Low-angle shots can be used when trying to create awe or excitement for the audience. It can also be used to increase the speed or height of an object or character, as well as to separate characters and objects in a scene.

Low-angle shots can help to inspire awe with the audience, when they are used to look up; for example at an architectural building. The audience then experiences looking up at the object. The same goes for important people, such as the President, or even the hero in the story. "A low angle is excellent for creating a cut-away reaction close-up against the sky, or other nondescript background" (Mascelli, 1998:42) (Cennamo, 2013; Mediaknowall, 2011).

### **3.3.4 Point-of-view shot**

Although the angle on the vertical axis is important, a point-of-view shot, also known as the POV, focuses primarily on presenting the audience a viewpoint through the character's eyes. It is most effective to use a point-of-view when the audience should be drawn closer to the events taking place. A close-up of the character's eyes usually leads to a point-of-view shot. This is often established when a shot of a character looking at something is shown, and this is followed by a shot of the character's reaction.

A point-of-view shot does not always have to be of a single character looking at something; but it could be shot over the shoulder of a character that can still be shown in the shot. A point-of-view shot can also be established when diegetic sounds, such as the characters speaking, objects making various sounds in the scene or music are used to establish the presence of the character without any visual means. Diegetic sound can be described as a sound whose source is visible on the screen, or whose source is implied as being present by the action of the film (Filmsound, 2013; Mascelli, 1998: 22; Princeton, 2013).

### 3.3.5 Bird's eye-view shot

This composition is used to view the characters or scene from a high angle. It is an extreme version of a high-angle shot. The images being filmed are the same as that which a bird would see when flying over the scene, or looking down at the scene from a high viewpoint. The camera is usually angled at a 45-degree angle to create a 3D-like quality of the scene. A bird's eye-view helps to capture the surroundings and to establish the placement of the subject or the characters. It also helps to give an interesting perspective on scenes, such as a car-chase or a building (Mindset, 2013; Media College, 2013; Mediaknowall, 2011; InPoint, 2013; Zillow, 2013).

### 3.3.6 Worm's eye-view shot

A **worm's eye-view** is used to view the characters or scene from a low angle. It is an extreme version of a low angle. It is used to look up at an object or character, to make them seem taller, stronger or mightier. A worm's eye-view helps to create a third perspective on a subject or character. The camera is placed at a very low angle, usually below the cameraman's eye-level, to shoot the action that is taking place, from as low as possible. Buildings or trees that are shot from a worm's eye-view look much more impressive and dramatic than when shot from eye-level or even low angle (Mindset, 2013).

### 3.3.7 Angle-plus-angle shot

According to Mascelli (1998:44), “an **angle-plus-angle** shot is filmed with a camera *angled in relation to the subject, and tilted either upwards or downwards*”. Through this form of double angle, one could record a spread of facets of an object; this can result in detailed modelling; it can deliver strong linear perspectives; and it can also produce a third-dimensional effect. These multiple-angle shots can help to erase the two-dimensional flatness of a level camera; and it thus helps to create a three-dimensional view.

The angle-plus-angle helps to create a more realistic view of the subject, as the audience can view the front and the side of a subject, as well as look up or down to view the bottom or top part of the subject. “The camera angling need not be very high or very low, or from a full three-quarter angle” (Mascelli, 1998:45).

### 3.3.8 Dutch tilt

This is also called canted angle (refer to Chapter 2 for the first reference). The Dutch tilt is when the camera is tilted or leaning sideways. This creates a slope in the horizon. A Dutch tilt can be used to create a dramatic effect, as well as to create unease, disorientation, madness and desperate action. A Dutch tilt can be used with panning, tilting or zooming, or with a combination of these shots. A ‘Dutch’ angle can cause distractions from the storyline, or the reason for the shot, especially if it is used when it is not fitting.

A ‘Dutch’ tilt angle is best used when shooting violent, weird, unstable or impressionistic shots. “The angle of tilt is most important. An image that slants to the right is active, forceful, while one that slants to the left, is weak and static” (Mascelli, 1998:48). When using a ‘Dutch’ tilt, it is most effective when shooting from a low angle, with a wide-angle lens, as well as combining it with a three-quarter-camera angle. This would record the most violent angling, as well as to create a greater separation between the subject and the background.

Well-known films and directors that have utilised the Dutch Angle with great success are the Batman TV series in the 1960s, and later, the film *Batman begins* (2005), *The Bride of Frankenstein* in 1935 by James Whales, Hitchcock in most of his films, and in particular with great success in *Shadow of a doubt*. More recent films that have utilised this angle well are *Slum-dog millionaire* (2008), *Doubt* (2008) and *Star Trek: final stand* (2010) (Mascelli, 1998: 47; Media College, 2013; UPG, 2013; Hollywood Lexicon, 2013).

## 3.4 CONCLUSION

The correct camera angles help to establish the scene and the action taking place; and most importantly, it can show how the audience experiences the scene. If the proper camera angles are used, then the audience can appreciate the film as an entity; however, if the wrong camera angle is used for a scene, then the audience could feel indifferent to the film – or perhaps not understand the storyline.

The angle at which the image is shot, and the size of the image will determine what the audience will perceive, and also what they need to see to help form the scene. This would also contribute to the telling of the story. Each shot that is filmed must be done with the utmost care, so as to present the audience with new viewpoints, various image sizes, and various uses of shots. These shots must not be placed in a predictable pattern, so that the audience would know what to expect every time a shot changes.

Each shot should be placed in various patterns, so as to surprise the audience every time the shot changes. Camera angles that are designed to “capture, sustain and point the way to continued audience interest, should be selected” (Mascelli, 1998:65).

Chapter 2 described media aesthetics and cinematographic concepts, and how these can be inter-related, which makes it easier to understand Mascelli’s theoretical meanings of filming techniques, and how these techniques can be applied when filming theatrical and non-theatrical films. Mascelli’s theoretical meanings of filming techniques can be applied to any type of film being made. Mascelli’s theories must be combined with media aesthetics, for one to be able to choose the right shot for the specific scene, as well as to keep in mind what the audience wants.

The next chapter describes the research methodology used in this dissertation, and how it utilises the knowledge gained through Mascelli and others. The research was qualitative in nature, as films are; and it used a focus group as the core methodology.

## Chapter 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is dedicated to the research methodology applied in this study. This study analyses the unconventional camera angles in two films, namely: *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The analysis was done to determine whether the unconventional camera angles used in these award-winning films were successful in the eyes of the viewers.

The films were selected, because in 1996 John Seale won the ‘Oscar for Best Cinematography’ in *The English Patient*. *The English Patient* competed with films such as *Evita*, *Fargo*, *Fly Away Home*, and *Michael Collins* for this award.

In 2009, Mauro Fiore won the ‘Oscar for Best Cinematography’ for *Avatar*. *Avatar*, in that year, competed with films, such as *The Hurt Locker*, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, *Inglourious Basterds* and *The White Ribbon* – for this prestigious award.

Unconventional camera angles will be used as the main focus of this study in each of the two films, to determine whether the viewers experienced the use of the unconventional camera angles in the films, as Mascelli describes it (refer to Chapter 3 for detail).

Triangulation is a methodological approach, which combines and interrelates data or methods to be able to receive diverse viewpoints on a specific topic or event. The three methods used in the research were: focus groups, questionnaires, as in qualitative research, and a literature study (see Chapter One). The design of the first two procedures will be described later in this chapter.

#### **4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Qualitative research is used in this study because it provides a way to go deeper into issues of interest. It furthermore helps to develop an initial understanding of the issues, or to understand the views of people on aspects on which they are questioned, such as their experience of camera angles in a film. Qualitative research

thus helps to understand the participants', viewers' or audiences' views and feelings on a particular matter (UP, 2013).

Qualitative research is research undertaken within the world of the participant, or in its natural setting. It is constructed in such a fashion that the particular world that is studied is made visible. The world being studied is turned into a series of recordings, and memos, or questions. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:3).

Qualitative research studies are aimed at gaining insight or understanding of a specific subject, organisation, or event, or in this instance, the experience of the viewer of a camera angle utilised in a particular scene in a film. Qualitative research is a way of generating data about different human groups or their experiences in various social settings. Qualitative research is also called field research. It is a research method, which can adjust to the settings in which the research is taking place, and can allocate meaning to behaviour, comment or feedback that emerges from the participants.

Qualitative research is used to better understand how the surroundings influence the behaviour or understanding of the participants. The tools and collection method can be modified as the research progresses (UP, 2013; Berg & Lune, 2012:4; CSULB, 2013).

The main qualitative research methods are observation, interviews (that can be assisted with questionnaires) and documentary analysis. Observation helps to explore the natural environment of the participants. Observation helps the researcher to blend into the natural activities of the participants, as well as to give them access to the same places, the people with whom they come into contact, and the events in which they participate. It gives the researcher first-hand experience to understand what, how and why the participants are doing a specific thing.

The best way to collect data on a specific subject is by the means of interviews, e.g. to collect data about people's workplace, the work they are doing, and the

environment in which they are living and operating. Some interviews may be more structured, in order to achieve a specific outcome, while others can be unstructured – to allow the participants to be more comfortable – and to give their opinions in an open environment. Interviews can be unstructured, but they still consist of general ideas on the topic, which help the researcher to have a discussion with the participants, and make the ideas of the topic flow into the conversation to make it more natural and easy for the participants.

The researcher makes the participants feel more comfortable when s/he is listening intently to what they are saying and showing interest, but also still keeping the conversation going on the topic. The researcher must appear more natural than to be seen as someone who has a special role in the conversation (UP, 2013; Berg & Lune, 2012:4; CSULB, 2013).

Questionnaires help to gather specific information, which is difficult to gather/reach through personal interviews. They can also be used to structure interviews, or to structure the information gathered. The information might be more limited than in the case of interviews, but it can be useful in certain circumstances. Focus groups also fall within the ambit of qualitative research, as they are a form of information gathering (UP, 2013; Berg & Lune, 2012:4; CSULB, 2013).

#### **4.3 FOCUS GROUPS**

Focus groups are an essential element of qualitative research, as they bring a group of people together to give their views and opinions on a particular matter with the guidance of a moderator.

“The focus group is an interview style designed for small groups of unrelated individuals, formed by an investigator and led in a group discussion on some particular topic or topics” (Barbour, 2008). Focus groups help the moderator/investigator to gather information regarding a specific topic. This information can be used to help improve programmes, organisations, studies and communities, and also to understand peoples’ views on subjects. The participants usually come from similar social and cultural backgrounds; or they are selected purposefully for the particular research.

Focus groups usually consist of 8-12 participants under the direction of a moderator. The duration of a focus group session is usually between 30-60 minutes, but it can continue to 150 minutes, but not any longer than that. More than one focus group with different participants can be held to collect the data needed for the study. Field notes are taken during the session (or captured in a structured questionnaire) and a scientific team or the moderator will observe the data and make notes. The qualitative nature of a focus group makes it easy to focus on a particular theme, issue or concern that can be substantiated with quotes taken from the session (Kimel, 2003; LU, 2012; UpFront, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2000).

A focus group helps to provide concentrated amounts of rich data on any particular topic, which is formed by the participants'; their own words are captured in a questionnaire. The interaction of the participants within the focus group helps to create more depth to the data when they communicate with each other in the group. Such detailed information can be missed when they are individually interviewed.

The limitation of a focus group is the small number of participants participating in the session. If the moderator is inexperienced, then the dynamics of the group can be a challenge, as he or she would not know how to handle the group – if the conversation were to deviate from the topic. The interpretations of the data can be difficult for the moderator if they are inexperienced, as they are time-consuming and require experienced analysts, in order to analyse the data accurately (Kimel, 2003). These limitations can, fortunately, be overcome; and good planning and structure can help prevent such problems from occurring.

Focus group interviews can be used as a stand-alone-data-gatherer, or in a triangulation process. When used in a triangulation process, they have to be combined with other forms of research, such as questionnaires. The questionnaires will be used to form a more structured interview and to gather more specific information within the focus group; while the focus group would help to create a more relaxed environment for the participants, so that they can speak freely and raise their opinions on any specific matter (Kimel, 2003; LU, 2012; UpFront, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2000).

According to Berg and Lune (2012:172), the focus group technique has the following advantages and disadvantages.

Table 4.1: The advantages and disadvantages of focus groups.

<b><i>Advantages of a focus group</i></b>	<b><i>Disadvantages of a focus group</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is highly flexible.</li> <li>▪ It permits the gathering of a large amount of information from potentially large groups of people in relatively short periods of time.</li> <li>▪ It can generate important insights into topics that previously were not well understood.</li> <li>▪ It allows researchers to better understand how members of a group arrive at, or alter, their conclusions about some topics or issues, and provides access to interaction clues.</li> <li>▪ It can be used to gather information from different population groups.</li> <li>▪ Focus groups lend themselves to a different kind of analysis than that which might be carried out with surveys, or even individual interviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The quality of the data is deeply influenced by the skills of the facilitator to motivate and moderate. (If not assisted with questionnaires).</li> <li>▪ Focus group attendance is voluntary, and an insufficient number may attend a given planned session.</li> <li>▪ The length (duration) of each focus group needs to be fairly brief (Ideally between 30 to 60 minutes, although longer focus groups do occur).</li> <li>▪ A limited number of questions can be used during the course of any focus group session.</li> <li>▪ Only group, not individual, responses are obtained in the results.</li> <li>▪ Dominant personalities may overpower and steer the group's responses, unless the moderator is sufficiently active.</li> <li>▪ The researcher must be careful about how s/he uses (or attempts to generalise) information obtained from focus groups.</li> </ul>

Focus groups provide similar information, as does traditional interviewing and direct observations. There are two kinds of focus groups that can be used, namely: a less-structured approach and market research. Market research is used when the moderator has to play an active role in the group, and when specific answers need to be obtained for the client.

Discussion between the moderator and the participants would be minimal, but more interaction should take place. The less-structured approach is used when the moderator wants the participants to communicate with each other, rather than with him or her. This helps the participants to express their meanings and interpretations on any specific matter.

The moderator's only role is to facilitate the discussion (Liamputpong, 2011). The moderator in this study helped the participants to express their opinions, when more than one camera angle was used, in order to determine which camera angle they would have focused on and why. The discussion on each question was focused to ensure an accurate recording of the responses.

#### **4.4 QUESTIONNAIRES**

The questionnaires in this study were used during the focus group session to guide the participants, structure the feedback, and to give the opportunity to report in a percentage format. Through the questionnaires, the probable disadvantages of an inexperienced facilitator could also be countered.

A questionnaire is a method of collecting data about a specific topic or issue. The type of data being collected determines the way in which the questionnaire is designed. The research topic determines the questions being asked which would lead to the relevant data being collected. Each questionnaire consists of a list of questions with clear instructions for the respondents on how to fill it in correctly. Each questionnaire should state clearly how the findings would be used, and each question must be related to the specific topic or issue. No question should be asked just for interest's sake (Kirklees, 2013; UP, 2006, IIE, 2012).

Structured and unstructured questionnaires can be used when gathering information. Structured questionnaires consist of closed questions, which make it easier to analyse than questions from open-ended questionnaires (unstructured questionnaires). This type of question can sometimes make it difficult for the respondent to answer, as they might give the respondent more options from which to choose. And this could lead to difficulty in answering the questions. Structured questions commonly make use of a scale, such as the 3-, 5-, or 7-point Likert-Scale,

from which the respondent has to choose the option with which s/he most closely agrees.

These scales are better known as the *Likert Scale* or *Semantic Differential Scale*. Making use of these scales might help the respondent to answer the questions, because there are the following possibilities of: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Scales are used to help the researcher discover the strength of feelings or attitudes the respondents have towards any particular topic or issue (Kirklees, 2013; UP, 2006; McLeod, 2008; Bertram, 2013; IIE, 2012).

#### **4.5 PARTICULAR PROCEDURES PERFORMED IN THIS STUDY**

As said previously, the primary research strategy of this study was to elicit meaningful answers from viewers by means of a focus-group procedure. This focus group consisted of eight adults whose visual literacy in terms of narrative films could be described as high.

The group was guided by means of structured questions in a printed questionnaire that could be completed while viewing the film; and the particular portions on which the questions were based. (Please refer to Annexures A and B for the two questionnaires, one on each film, namely: one on Avatar, and one on The English Patient.)

During the focus-group session open-ended questions were also asked, in particular, to establish the viewers' interpretations/experiences of the impact and success of the use of multiple camera angles. An example would be an extreme long shot that was combined with a high-angle shot in the film, where the viewer was requested to interpret the success of the impact thereof with regard to, for example, the mood created.

The researcher acted as moderator, and a set of semi-structured questions, as well as structured questionnaires based on meanings attached to camera-angle codes, as defined by Mascelli, were answered by the participants. (Refer to Annexures A and B.)

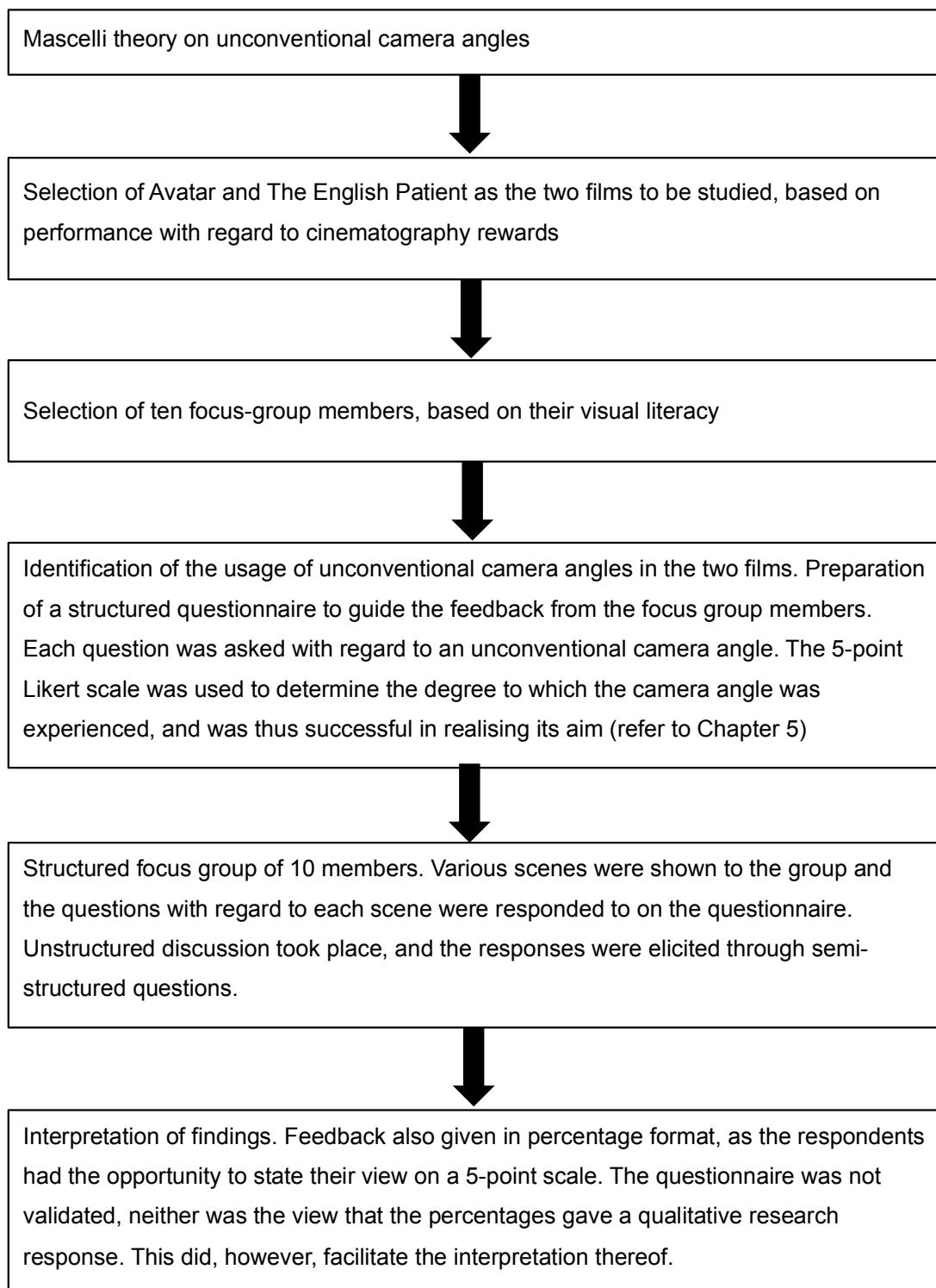
The codification scheme (refer to Chapters 1 and 3) of Mascelli was applied to the unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The viewers had to answer and provide their opinions on 25 questions with regard to each film. These were selected out of the first 30 minutes of each film.

Only 25 questions were asked, in order to determine the most common uses of each unconventional camera angle. As the same camera angles were often repeated, the full film was not used to design the question set. The 25 questions guided the group and helped them to focus on particular angles in specific scenes.

The question design was based on the application of Mascelli's theory with regard to the various unconventional camera angles used in scenes of the two films selected. The viewers then indicated, on a five-point scale, the extent to which they experienced the particular angle in a particular scene, and what the impact of it was. The level on the scale (either 1 [low] through to 5 [high]), plus the number of responses, gave an indication of the viewer's interpretation. This was supported by the discussion that took place; while the semi-structured questions asked by the moderator assisted in the interpretation of the issues.

The structured questions, answered on a five-point Likert scale, not only made the responses easier and more standardised (refer to earlier in this chapter), but also made possible an overall comparison between the two films.

The process and interpretation procedure was captured as follows:



#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

Qualitative research is a method to gather information on a specific topic, by making use of focus groups, questionnaires and observation. The purpose of qualitative research is to diagnose problems, gather background information, to solve a problem or issue, and to obtain better results. The results have to be interpreted and generated for the average person to understand, and to be able to implement the results.

In the case of this particular study, a carefully selected focus group was used, in the particular mode of a focus group, to respond to structured questions through a questionnaire, and to the semi-structured questions in an open discussion. The feedback was given with supportive percentages, in order to assist and support the interpretation.

## Chapter 5

### **VIEWERS' INTERPRETATION OF UNCONVENTIONAL CAMERA ANGLES IN AVATAR AND *THE ENGLISH PATIENT***

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#### **5.1 BACKGROUND**

This chapter is dedicated to the viewers' interpretation of unconventional camera angles in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The unconventional camera angles, that were focused on, are high angle, low angle, eye-level shot, point-of-view shots, bird's eye-view shots and worm's eye-view shots.

The unconventional camera angles used in both films were probably chosen to heighten the dramatic visualisation of the story. Continued interest had to be aroused with the viewer through each unconventional camera angle, as the story moved along, in order to make the film successful.

Structured questionnaires, designed around particular scenes that depict particular unconventional camera angles, were given to the participants of the focus group. The purpose was to guide the participant with regard to the particular question asked and the angle to observe, as well as to assist the interpretation. Open-ended/semi-structured questions were asked during the focus group session, in order to gather the opinions of the viewers on the use of certain angles, and in particular, multiple angles in the film.

The questionnaires were used as a support in a qualitative framework, and because of the scale and the size of the group, although small, it could be depicted in a graph format and by way of an assisted interpretation. The questionnaires were measured using a Likert Scale. "Likert Scales have the advantage that they do not expect a simple yes/no answer from the respondent, but rather allow for degrees of opinion, and even no opinion at all" (McLeod, 2008). Thus the questions were asked in a yes/no format, but the questionnaire provided the respondents the opportunity to give their opinion on the question.

Some of the questions in this chapter will be answered individually, as the camera angles used in these questions have different meanings and reasons for their use.

Other questions will be answered as a group, as these camera angles have the same purpose and meaning; and it is unnecessary to explain each one individually.

The graphs indicate the percentages of the viewers' responses to the 5-point Likert Scale in the questionnaires. The questions were asked and interpreted, according to the theory of Mascelli (as explained in Chapter 3). The graphs must be interpreted as follows: the horizontal axis states the Likert-Scale categories used in the questionnaires, and the vertical axis indicates the percentages of the responses given by the 10 viewers.

## 5.2 AVATAR

### 5.2.1 The storyline

*Avatar* was written and directed by the Academy Award-winner, James Cameron.

A paraplegic ex-marine, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) was summoned to join a planet, Pandora, to pick up the job of his twin brother who was killed, for the scientific arm of a megacorporation which is looking to mine valuable ore on Pandora.

The ore the megacorporation wishes to mine lies beneath the home of the Na'vi. Na'vi is a ten-foot-tall, blue-skinned native tribe who have been fighting for their home against Col. Miles Quaritch (Stephen Lang). Pandora has a hostile atmosphere for humans to live in.

Jake's brother had an expensive Avatar grown for him. This made it possible for Jake to connect with the Avatar as they have the same DNA. The scientific team is led by Grace Augustine (Sigourney Weaver) and Norm Spellman (Joel David Moore). These scientists believe in the protection of the planet and the Na'vi group.

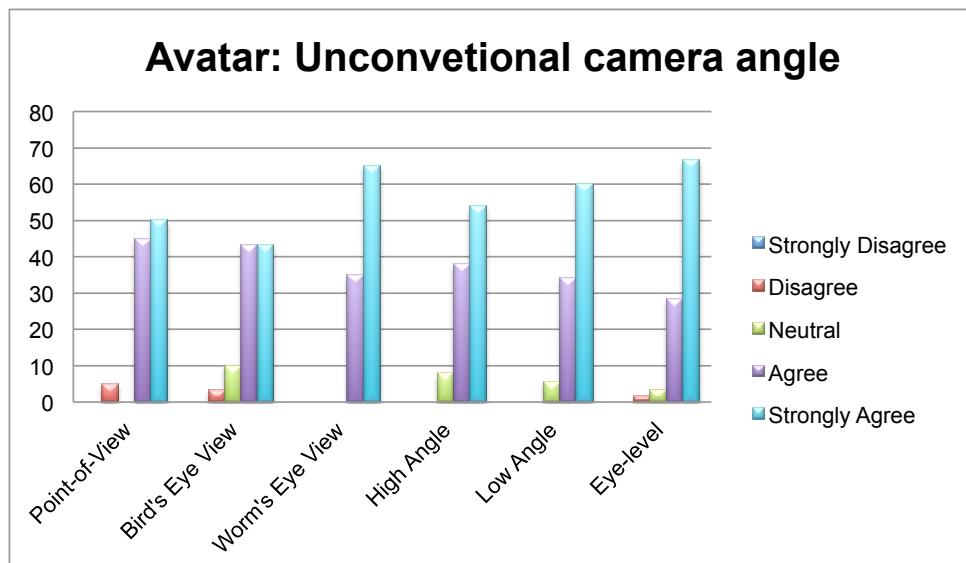
The scientists and Jake take to explore Pandora, and while on this exploration Jake is separated from the group, and is rescued by Neytiri (Zoe Saldana), a Na'vi princess. Neytiri takes Jake to her tribe, with the hope that the tribe will give the humans a second chance. Quaritch finds out that Jake has been spending a lot of time with the tribe, and summons him to do some investigation for the megacorporation. Quaritch wants to persuade the tribe to move their home, so that they can start mining the ore.

Jake is torn between his real life in a wheelchair and the new adopted world. Soon Jake will face war between the Avatars and the humans. He has to decide, which side he is on, when the time comes.

The film was shot on the proprietary FUSION digital 3D cameras developed by Cameron in collaboration with Vince Pace, and it offers a ground-breaking mix of live-action dramatic performances and computer-generated effects. "The revolutionary motion-capture system created for the film allows the facial expressions of the actors to be captured, as a virtual camera system enables them to see what their computer-generated counterparts would be seeing in the film; and Peter Jackson's Oscar-winning Weta Digital visual-effects house supervises Avatar's complex special effects" (Moviefone, 2013). The running time for *Avatar* is 160 minutes.

### 5.2.2 A qualitative content analysis of unconventional camera angles in *Avatar*

**Figure 5.1** *Avatar* – unconventional camera angles



The graph above indicates the various unconventional camera angles analysed in *Avatar*.

The above graph represents the average feedback with regard to two Point-of-view questions, three Bird's eye-view questions, two Worm's eye-view questions, five

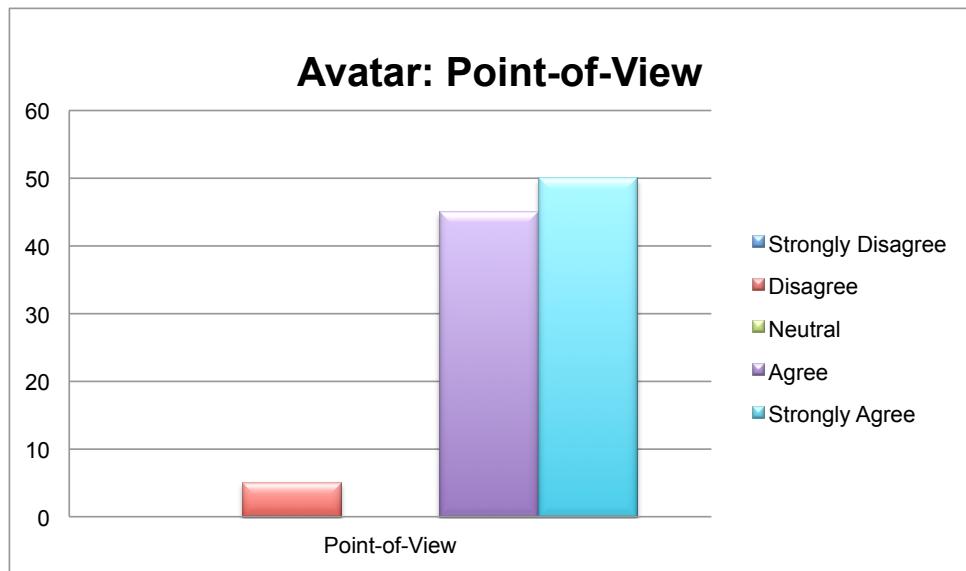
High Angle, seven Low angle and six Eye-level questions. (Refer to Annexure A. The number of questions is representative of the usage of the particular angle within the first 30 minutes of the film.)

The graph indicates the responses of the viewers to the particular questions asked about the various unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar*. The light blue bar indicates that the viewers of the focus group found the use of the unconventional camera angles extremely effective; while the purple bar supports these views, as it still falls in the positive rating area. The green bar indicates that the viewers felt neutral or indifferent towards a particular unconventional camera angle used in the film, in a specific scene. The red and dark blue bar represents the negative views of the viewers towards some of the unconventional camera angles used in the film. As there is very little indication of the red bar, it can be interpreted that the viewers found the overall use of the unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* as having been effectively implemented.

(The *Avatar* questionnaire is added to this paper as Annexure A.)

### 5.2.3 Point-of-view shot questions asked in the Avatar questionnaire

**Figure 5.2 Avatar – Point-of-View**



The first point-of-view question was: *Did the point-of-view shot of the soldiers running out of the aircraft make you as the viewer a part of the action taking place?* This question was asked to determine whether the audience felt as if they were one of the soldiers running out of the aircraft, and if they felt themselves to be a part of the action.

A total of 60% strongly agreed; and 40% agreed. The use of the point-of-view shot of the soldier was thus in the view of most respondents effectively used to draw the audience into the scene, and to make them a part of the events taking place.

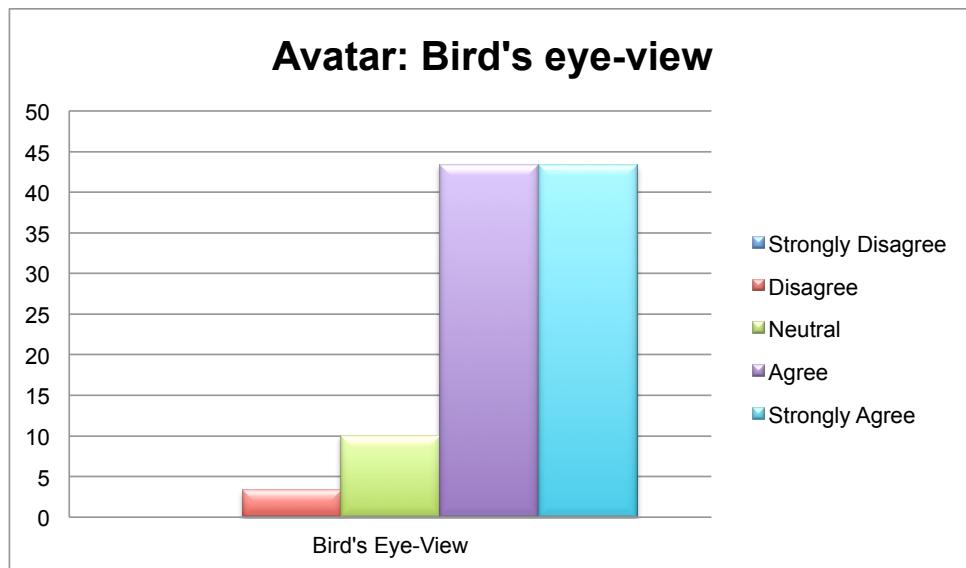
The next point-of-view question asked was: *Does the point of view of Jake as his Avatar, help to portray what he sees when he is connected to his Avatar?* This question was asked to establish whether the viewer felt closer to the event that was taking place by seeing it through or from a particular characters' viewpoint.

As many as 40% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 10% disagreed. This indicates that most of the viewers felt as if they were looking through Jake's eyes, and felt closer to the action that was taking place. Even though 10% disagreed, this does not mean that the use of a point-of view shot was used incorrectly or unnecessarily. The

director still made a good decision to make use of the point-of-view shot. One may, therefore, conclude that the director made effective use of the point-of-view shot.

#### 5.2.4 Bird's eye-view shot questions asked in the Avatar questionnaire

Figure 5.3 Avatar – Bird's eye view



Three bird's eye-view questions were asked: (1) *Did the bird's eye-view of the surroundings help to create an overall placement of where this story is being told?* (2) *Did the bird's eye view of the aircraft and the planets give the scene a 3D-like quality?* (3) *Does the bird's eye-view help to indicate the magnitude of Pandora?* These questions were asked to determine whether the use of the bird's eye-view helped the viewers feel as if they are looking down at Pandora from a high vantage point. It was also asked to determine whether the bird's eye-view created a 3D-like quality of the scene, as well as if it helped to create intriguing perspectives of Pandora.

The bird's eye-view shot was used to establish the placement of the subject and characters.

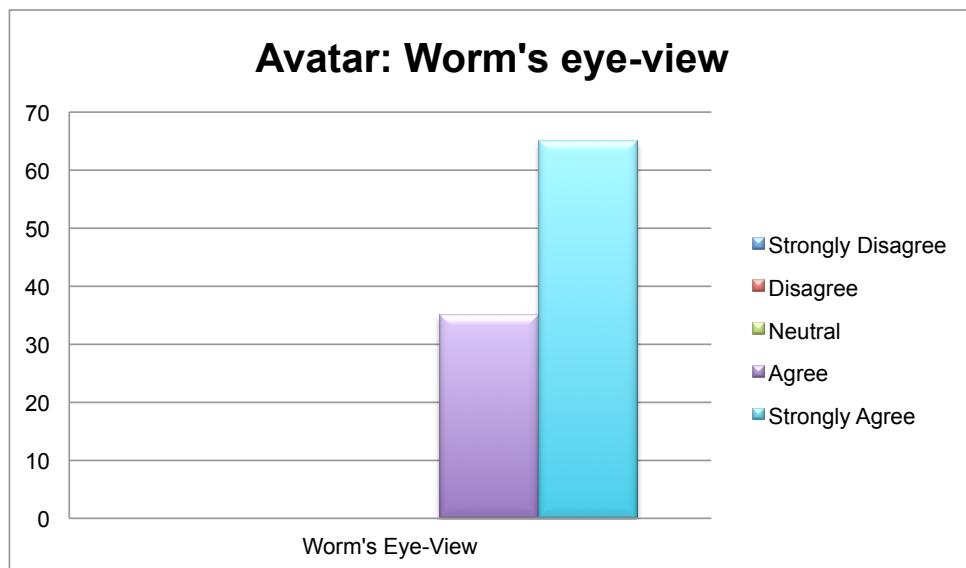
As the graph indicates, the viewers found the use of the bird's eye-view to be appropriate in the film, as well as to represent the specific shots. Of the viewers,

43.33% experienced the bird's eye-shots as being effectively used in *Avatar*; thus 43.33% of the viewers agreed; 10% were neutral; and 3.34% disagreed. Once again, the overwhelming majority experienced these types of angles as that which they were intended to be.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on the use of an extreme long shot combined with the bird's eye-view in the first question. The viewers found the use of the extreme long shot combined with the bird's eye-view helped them to experience the beauty of Pandora; and it helped to put them in the proper mood for the film (90%). One comment was: "This was shown to be a beautiful place; I was excited to be there, and wanted to know and experience more".

#### 5.2.5 Worm's eye-view shot questions asked in the *Avatar* questionnaire

**Figure 5.4 Avatar – Worm's eye-view**



Two questions were asked about the use of the worm's eye-view shot in *Avatar*. Question (1) *Did the worm's eye-view of Parker playing golf indicate his superior role in the film?* (2) *Did the worm's eye-view of Jake's Avatar make him seem stronger and mightier than when he is in a wheelchair?*

The use of the worm's eye-view shot in *Avatar* was to view the characters or the subjects from a very low angle; this helps the character or subject to seem taller,

stronger or mightier. The worm's eye-view can also make a scene more dramatic and impressive than can a low-angle or eye-level shot.

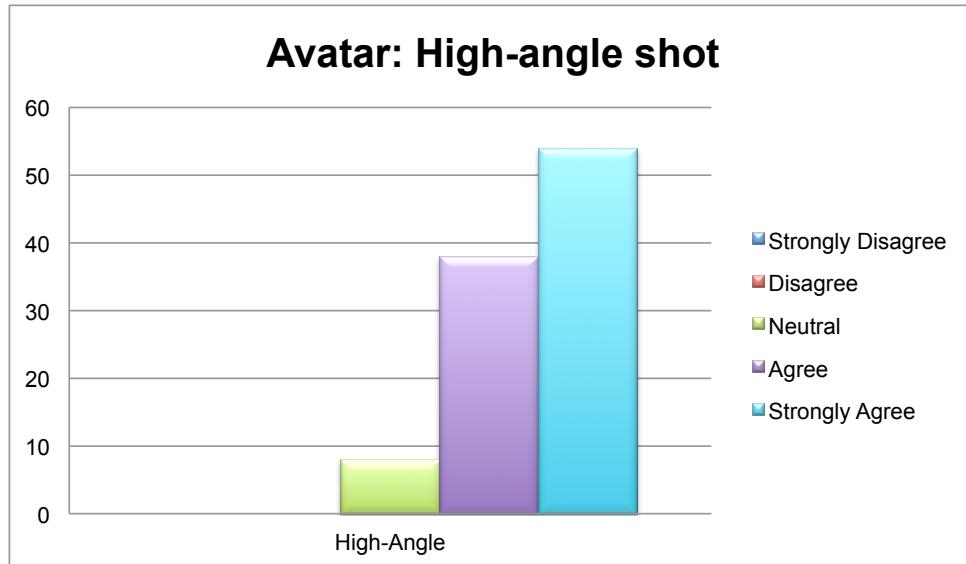
A total of 66.67% of the viewers strongly agreed that the use of the worm's eye-view shots used in *Avatar* helped to make the subject or character seem mightier and stronger, as well as to dramatize the scene, while 33.33% merely agreed.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on the use of the long shot combined with the worm's eye-view of the tree. The viewers described the long shot as a shot used to help them understand where the action was taking place, and to understand the location. They also felt the combination of the long shot and the worm's eye-view made the tree seem bigger and more impressive.

The group agreed that the tree seemed bigger and very impressive. "It made us believe that the location was impressive and worth protecting. We wanted to fight for it."

#### 5.2.6 High-angle shot questions asked in the Avatar questionnaire

Figure 5.5 Avatar – High-angle shot



The first high angle question was: *Did the high angle of the box show you how easily a life can be taken and that the people Jake's brother worked for did not care that he lost his life?*

This question was asked to determine whether the audience viewed the dead person in the box as lonely or having a lack of power, as well as to determine whether or not the audience was keeping track of the action that was taking place.

As many as 30% strongly agreed; 50% agreed; and 20% were neutral. This indicates that the high angle succeeded in helping the audience keep track of the action that was taking place, and to make the dead person in the box seem helpless.

The second high-angle question was: *Did the high-angle shot of the aircraft and the surrounds interest you as to what they were doing and where they might be going?*

This question was asked to determine whether the high-angle shot helped the audience to keep track of the action that was taking place, as well as to understand where they were going.

Only 40% strongly agreed; 50% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the viewers found the use of a high-angle shot important in helping them to understand who and what were involved in the story. The high-angle shot also contributed to the scale of Pandora. The 10% who were neutral might not have understood the use of a high-angle shot, and thus felt it was unnecessary to establish all the elements in the shot.

The viewers were asked if the extreme long shot combined with the high angle helped to create an atmospheric impression of the location. They agreed that the extreme long shot of the surroundings and the aircraft helped to create an atmospheric impression, and that it helped them establish the location for the scene that followed.

The third high-angle question was: *Does the high-angle shot of the aircraft and the island help to indicate what type of environment it is which these people are entering?*

This question was asked to establish whether the audience saw the people and the aircraft as having a lack of power against the magnitude of the environment into which they were entering.

Only 30% strongly agreed; 60% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the majority of the viewers saw the environment as the over-powering source, and that the humans had to be careful when entering this environment.

The fourth high-angle question was: *Does the high angle of the plants indicate their fragility when Jake touches them?*

This question was asked to determine the reason for the use of a high angle and to explain the nature of the plants.

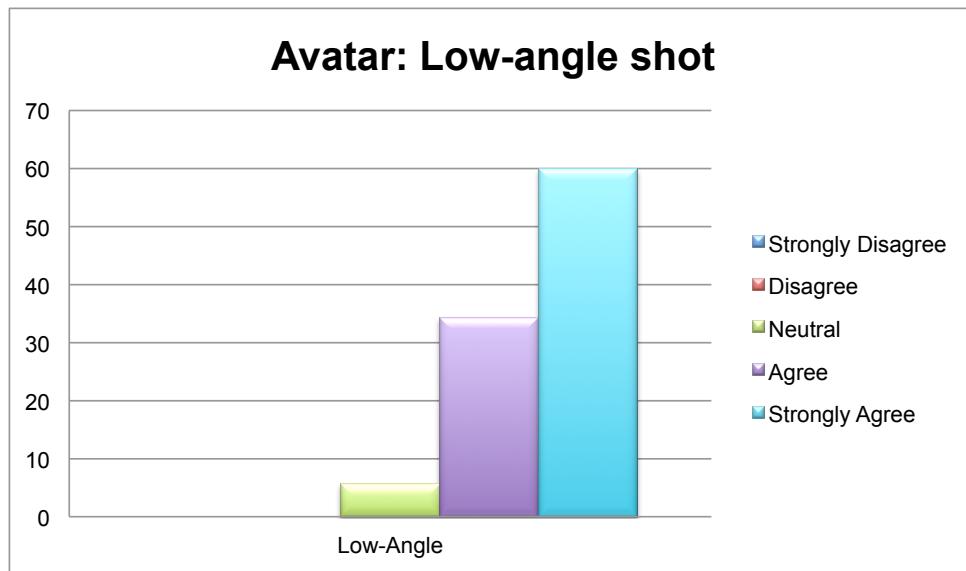
As many as 80% strongly agreed; while 20% agreed. This indicates that the use of a high-angle shot was effective in portraying the fragility of the plants.

The fifth high-angle question was: *Does the high angle of Jake indicate his lack of power towards the beast?* This question was asked to determine whether the high-angle shot was the best angle to use.

A total of 90% strongly agreed; and 10% agreed. The use of a high-angle shot was effectively experienced by the viewers in this scene, to help indicate the lack of power Jake had towards the beast.

### 5.2.7 Low-angle shot questions asked in the *Avatar* questionnaire

**Figure 5.6 Avatar – Low angle shot**



The first low-angle question was: *Did the low-angle shot of Jake Sully and the truck make the truck seem more dominant and threatening?* This question was asked to determine whether the low-angle shot helped to magnify the size of the truck against Jake Sully, as well as to make the truck seem more threatening and dominant in the environment in which they were.

Only 40% strongly agreed; 50% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the use of the low angle in this scene was effective and that it helped to make the truck seem more dominant and more threatening than Jake Sully. It also indicates that the audience felt the truck was a threat to the people and to the environment.

The second low-angle question was: *Does the low angle of Colonel Miles make him seem more threatening than someone with importance?* This question was asked to determine whether the audience viewed him as a threat, or merely as a person with stature.

A total of 50% strongly agreed; 40% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the audience viewed Colonel Miles as a threat, and not as someone with importance or control in this operation.

The third low-angle question was: *Does the low-angle shot of Jake Sully jumping out of the aircraft help to indicate his authority as a soldier in this shot?* This question was asked to determine whether the audience could see the role Jake was playing in the film already early in the film.

Only 30% strongly agreed; 60% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the viewers understood why Jake was there (only for his army background), and that he played an important role in that scene.

The fourth low-angle question was: *Does the low-angle shot of Grace show her dominance in the group of people in the forest examining the tree?* This question was asked to verify the importance of Grace in the film.

A total of 50% strongly agreed; 40% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that most of the viewers found Grace to be an important character in the film.

The fifth low-angle question was: *Does the low angle of the giant animal intensify the drama?* This question was asked to determine whether the low-angle question intensified the drama, as was intended by the director.

A total of 60% strongly agreed; and 40% agreed, which means that the low angle did intensify the drama, but perhaps not as much as the director had intended it to do.

The sixth low-angle question was: *Does the low angle of the giant animal portray his aggression and dominance towards Jake?*

A full 100% strongly agreed. This indicates that the viewers effectively experienced the use of a low angle to show dominance and aggression.

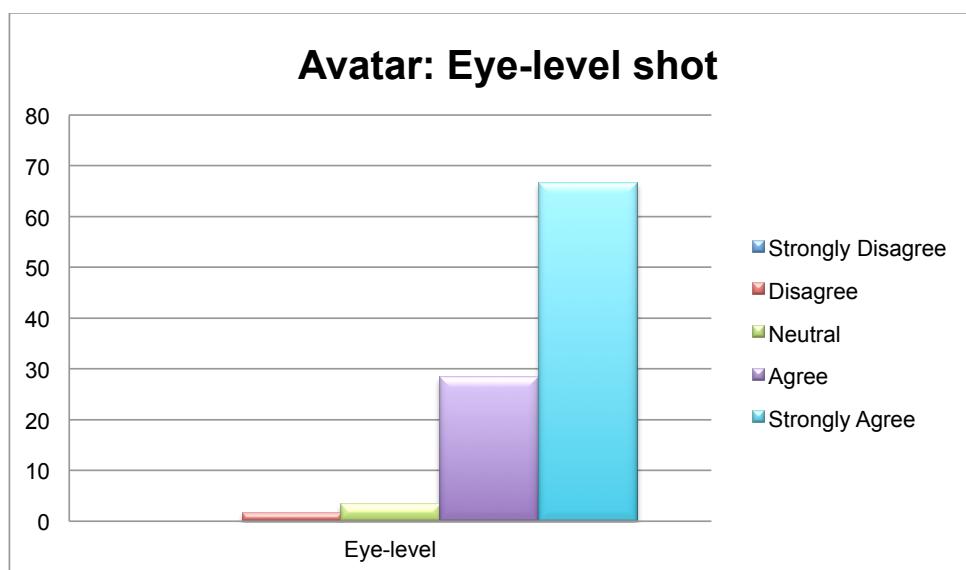
The seventh low-angle question was: *Does the low angle of the beast behind Jake portray him as a threat towards the people?* This question was asked to determine the importance of the beast in the story, as well as the use of the low angle to represent the beast.

A total of 90% strongly agreed; and 10% agreed. This indicates how the use of the low angle in this shot helped to portray the beast as dominant and vicious.

The viewers were asked whether the medium close-up combined with the low angle of the beast and Jake helped to make them more intimately a part of the action that was taking place. The viewers fully agreed, and said that if another type of shot were used in the scene then they would not have felt anxiety build up inside them when the beast emerged behind Jake.

#### 5.2.8 Eye-level shot questions asked in the Avatar questionnaire

Figure 5.7 Avatar – Eye-level shot



Six eye-level questions were asked in the *Avatar* questionnaire. Question (1) *Did the eye-level shot inside the Spaceship help to make the images seem more vertical and interesting?* (2) *Did the subject close-up shot help you, as the viewer, to experience the pain and loss Jake Sully is experiencing?* (3) *Did the eye-level shot of the laboratory help you to understand the storyline better?* (4) *Did the eye-level shot of Jake Sully with his Avatar indicate how strong his interest is in his Avatar?* (5) *Does the eye-level shot of the rock help you to understand the reason why they are there?* (6) *Does the eye-level shot of the Pandora bird indicate what type of animals live on Pandora, and what these people are going to encounter?*

An eye-level shot is used when the viewers should be drawn into a specific shot, and to help them understand the story line. The viewers then become a part of the shot,

and experience it from the same level as the character. Some eye-level shots help to dramatize the scene, which could cause more anxiety with the viewer.

As many as 66.67% of the viewers strongly agreed that the use of the eye-level shot drew them into the scene, and that it helped them to build a relationship with the character. A further 28.33% of the viewers agreed with the use of the eye-level shots used in the film; while 3.33% were neutral; and 1.67% disagreed.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on the use of a medium close-up with the eye-level shot of Jake with his Avatar. The viewers stated that the medium close-up helped them to connect with the action that was taking place, and to be able to understand the emotions going through Jake. This shot also helped them to feel as if they were looking at the Avatar in the tank, as if it were their Avatar they were looking at.

### **5.3 THE ENGLISH PATIENT**

#### **5.3.1 The storyline**

*The English Patient* was written and directed by Anthony Minghella. It is based on the novel of Michael Ondaatje. The novel is about a doomed and tragic romance in World War II. Hana (Juliette Binoche) is a nurse from Canada who is taking care of a pilot in a field hospital in Italy. The pilot's plane was shot down, and he was horribly burnt. The pilot has no identification and cannot remember who he is. He is then known as "The English Patient". The hospital was forced to evacuate; and Hana was determined to take care of the burnt pilot. The two of them were left in a monastery to be picked up later. As the patient remembers only bits and pieces of his life, Hana begins to put his story together.

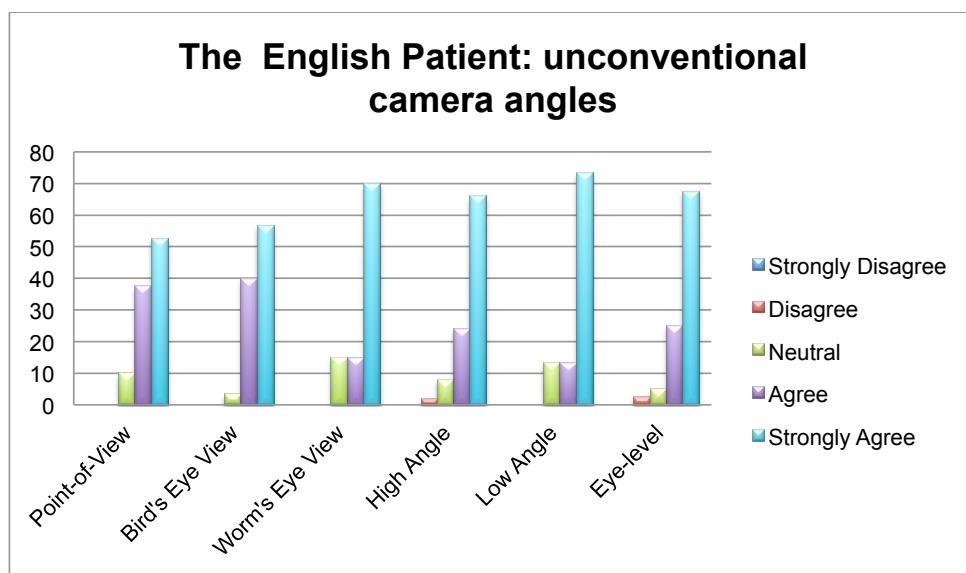
The patient is actually Count Laszlo Almasy (Ralph Fiennes). He is a Hungarian and was an explorer working for a group that mapped uncharted territory in North Africa. Another Englishman, Geoffrey Clifton (Colin Firth), joined Almasy to map the uncharted territory in North Africa. Clifton was travelling with his wife, Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas). On their travels, Katherine and Count Laszlo fall in love. Meanwhile, Hana and Count Laszlo are joined by Kip (Naveen Andrews), a Sikh who

has a gift for defusing mines, and Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), an intelligence agent who knows some of Count Laszlo's shameful secrets.

"The English Patient won nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Supporting Actress (Juliette Binoche)" (Moviefone, 2013). The running time for *The English Patient* is 162 minutes.

### **5.3.2 A qualitative content analysis of unconventional camera angles in *The English Patient***

**Figure 5.8 The English Patient – unconventional camera angles**



The graph above indicates the various unconventional camera angles analysed in *The English Patient*. The eight eye-level shot questions and the five high-angle shot questions received the strongest focus in the analyses, as these unconventional camera angles were the most used to represent specific scenes in *The English Patient*. (Refer to annexure B for the full set of questions.)

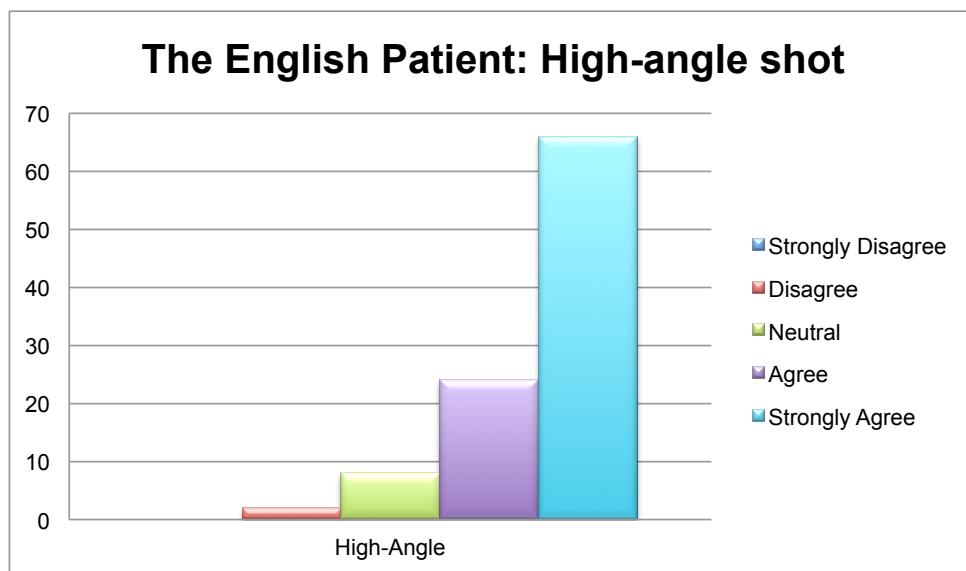
The light blue (strongly agree) and purple bar (agree) indicate that the viewers found the unconventional camera angles used in *The English Patient* were used in an appropriate manner to portray the particular scene. The green bar indicates that some of the viewers were uncertain of the use of some of the unconventional

camera angles in the film, but they constituted only a very low percentage of the overall feedback. The red and dark blue bars(strongly disagree) indicate that some of the viewers did not experience the use of the unconventional camera angles used in the film as being effective for the shot.

As there is no dark blue bar; and very little of the red bar can be seen, this shows that the viewers were in agreement with the unconventional camera angles used in *The English Patient*. (*The English Patient* questionnaire is added to this paper as Annexure B.)

### 5.3.3. High-angle shot questions asked in *The English Patient* questionnaire

**Figure 5.9 The English Patient – High-angle shot**



The first high-angle shot question was: *Does the high angle of the aircraft imply a lack of power towards the characters and the aircraft?* This question was asked to determine whether the high-angle shot helped to portray the characters as weak or having a lack of power in the situation.

Only 40% of the viewers strongly agreed; 50% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the use of the high camera angle to represent a lack of power towards the characters was effective.

The second high-angle question was: *Does the high-angle shot of Count Lazlo help to define what the story is all about when seeing him in pain?* This question was asked to determine whether the high-angle used in this shot was useful in portraying Count Lazlo as vulnerable and weak.

A grand total of 80% of the viewers strongly agreed; while 20% agreed. This indicates that the viewers found the use of the high-angle shot useful in portraying Count Lazlo as weak and vulnerable.

Give your opinion: *Does the combination of the close-up shot with the high-angle shot help to eliminate all other non-essential elements that might have distracted your attention from Count Laszlo?*

The viewers responded that the use of the close-up brought them closer to Count Laszlo, and helped them to build a relationship with him, in order to be able to better understand why this had happened to him. They stated that the close-up combined with the high angle helped to isolate the action, so that they could focus better on Count Laszlo – and thus to see in detail what had happened to his face.

The third high-angle shot question was: *Does the high-angle shot of the army base make you feel detached from the characters, and as if you were looking down on them from a third perspective?* This question was asked to determine whether the viewers felt as if they were watching over the army base, rather than being a part of the scene.

A total of 70% of the viewers strongly agreed; 10% agreed; and 20% were neutral. This indicates that the viewers felt as if they were watching the army base from a third perspective; and that they felt detached from them.

The fourth question was: *Does the high-angle shot of the cave and the people help you to understand where they are and why they are there?* This question was asked to determine whether the high-angle shot helped the viewers to understand why the

characters were in the cave, and to help them understand the shots that were going to follow.

Only 60% of the viewers strongly agreed; 20% agreed; 10% were neutral; and 10% disagreed.

The fifth high-angle question was: *Does the high-angle shot of the hands of the man in the caves and Count Laszlo's face help to make you more a part of the action that is taking place?* This question was asked to determine whether the high-angle shot could also be used to draw the viewers closer into the action that was taking place on the screen.

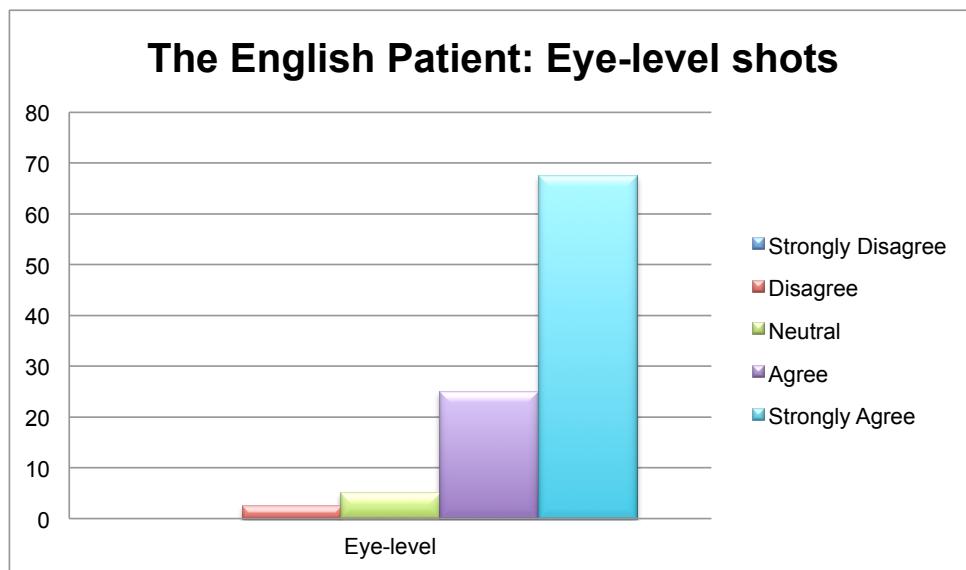
A total of 80% of the viewers strongly agreed; and 20% agreed. This indicates that the viewers felt more a part of the action that was taking place, and that it showed how weak Count Laszlo was.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on which other camera angle could have been used to help improve the high-angle shot used in this scene.

They responded that it was a close-up shot. They stated that the close-up shot helped to eliminate what was going on around the two characters, and to just focus on the actions of the man taking care of Count Laszlo. They felt the close-up combined with the high-angle shot made it feel as if they were also taking care of Count Laszlo themselves.

### 5.3.4. Eye-level shot questions asked in *The English Patient* questionnaire

Figure 5.10 *The English Patient* – Eye-level shots



The first eye-level question was: *Does the eye-level shot of the two characters in the aircraft create more drama than would a high-angle shot?* This question was asked to determine whether the viewers found the use of the eye-level shot in this scene more appropriate than a high-angle shot.

As many as 50% strongly agreed; 40% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the majority of the viewers found the use of an eye-level shot to be appropriate. The eye-level shot was used to break away from the majority of the high-angle shots used in the opening of the film.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on the use of an eye-level shot in this scene, rather than a high-angle shot. The viewers responded that a high-angle shot would have shown more of the aircraft and how it was being attacked, but it would not have been able to create the sense of emotion as did the eye-level shot.

The second eye-level question was: *Does the eye-level shot of the two characters in the aircraft create a bond between the viewers and the characters?* This question

was asked to determine whether the eye-level shot had another function, rather than merely to break away from the high-level shots.

While 50% strongly agreed; the other 50% agreed. This indicates that the viewers found the use of the eye-level shot to be effective in establishing a bond with the characters and their role in the film.

The third eye-level shot question was: *Does the eye-level shot of the burning aircraft and the characters inside it create more drama and make you feel more connected to the characters?* This was asked to determine whether the eye-level shot was the best option for the shot, or if another unconventional camera angle would have been better.

As many as 80% strongly agreed; while 20% agreed. This indicates that the viewers experienced the use of the eye-level shot in the appropriate manner, as they felt more connected to the characters, and felt anxiety when the aircraft started burning.

The viewers were asked to express their opinion on this question. They responded that the use of the eye-level shot brought them closer to the characters, and made it possible for them to feel a part of the action. They also said that being on eye-level with the action, they felt anxiety when the engine gave in, and that they wanted to help the characters get out of that situation.

The fourth eye-level question was: *Does the eye-level shot of Hana crying on the ground draw you closer to her to establish a relationship and to be able to understand her pain?*

A majority of 90% agreed; while 10% were neutral. This indicates that the eye-level shot of Hana lying on the ground crying was effectively used to draw the viewers closer to her, and to build a relationship with Hana.

The fifth eye-level shot question was: *Does the eye-level shot of the man in the cave singing help you to understand his soft nature and his caring for the burnt man?*

A total of 70% strongly agreed; and 30% agreed. This indicates that the eye-level shot brought the viewers closer to the man and his reason for being part of this scene.

The sixth eye-level shot question was: *Does the subject close-up eye-level shot of Count Laszlo make you feel a part of the conversation taking place between Count Laszlo and the soldier?*

As many as 60% strongly agreed; and 40% merely agreed. This indicates that the use of the subject close-up eye-level shot made the viewers feel a part of the conversation taking place between Count Laszlo and the soldier – as if they were actually there.

The seventh eye-level shot question was: *Does the eye-level shot of the car exploding create more drama in this particular shot?* This question was asked to determine whether the viewers found the eye-level shot to be more practical than a high-angle shot in this particular scene.

As many as 50% strongly agreed, 20% agreed, 10% were neutral; and 20% disagreed. This indicates that most of the viewers found the eye-level shot to be practical in this scene, and to create more of a viewer's perspective, so that the viewers could be a part of the action taking place in the scene. The 20% who disagreed might have felt that another type of unconventional angle would have created more of a dramatic effect, such as a high-angle shot.

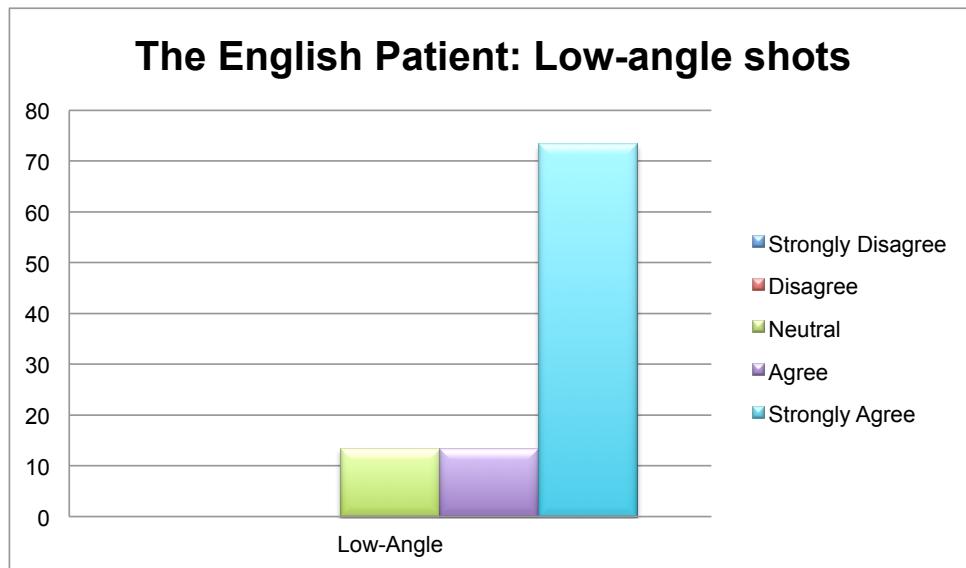
The viewers were asked if they would have liked the camera angle to be from a bird's eye-view to show the explosion better; but they responded that having the angle from eye-level made them connect with Hana and the conversation she had with her friend. They also said that it certainly created more drama in the film when another special person was taken from Hana.

The eighth eye-level shot question was: *Does the eye-level shot of Hana and the exploding car in the background draw you closer to Hana and her situation?*

A total of 90% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that the viewers felt a part of the scene, and they felt the pain Hana was going through when she lost her friend.

### 5.3.5. Low-angle shot questions asked in *The English Patient* questionnaire

Figure 5.11 The English Patient – Low-angle shots



Three low-angle questions were asked in *The English Patient* questionnaire.

Question (1) *Does the low angle of the aircraft portray the aircraft as a threat to the people on the ground?* (2) *Does the low angle of Hana make her seem superior and unconcerned about the actions taking place around her?* (3) *Does the low angle of Hana and her friend talking in the cars make Hana seem important and special to her friend?*

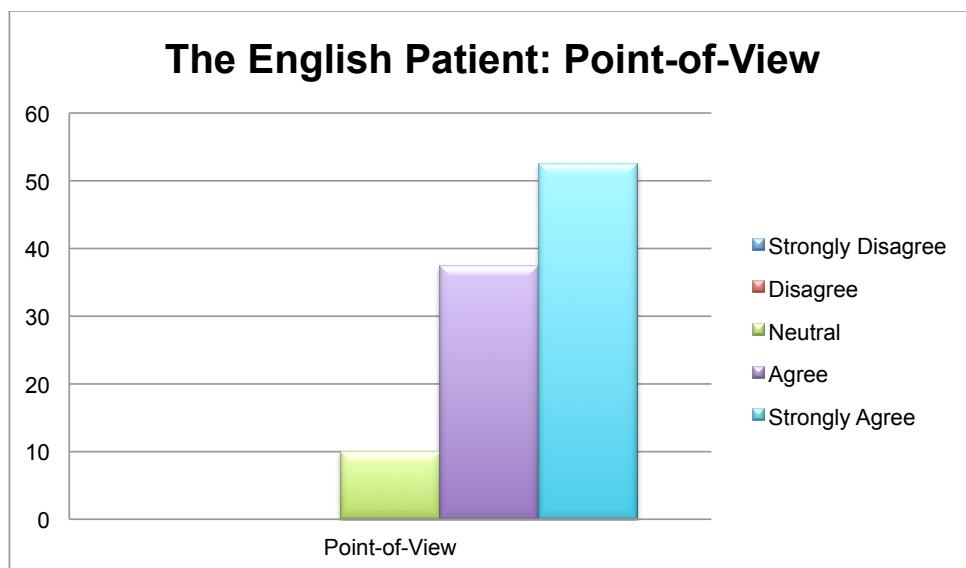
A low-angle shot was used to make the character being looked up at look more dominant, threatening or aggressive. The low-angle shot also works well with point-of-view shots, as the audience could identify with the lowly player and could then become more emotionally involved with the lowly player (Elements of Cinema, 2013).

As many as 73.34% of the viewers strongly agreed that the low-angle shots used in *The English Patient* helped to portray the character as being dominant in the shot, and dominant as the main focus of the shot. Only 13.33% agreed that the low-angle was appropriately used in these various shots; and another 13.33% were neutral.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on the medium close-up shot combined with the low-angle shot used in the third question. They responded that the medium close-up helped them to be more intimately part of the conversation between Hana and her friend, as well as for them to see the facial expressions and body language better, and thus to understand the relationship between Hana and her friend.

#### 5.3.6. Point-of-view questions asked in *The English Patient* questionnaire

**Figure 5.12 The English Patient – Point-of-View**



The first point-of-view shot question was: *Does the point-of-view shot of Count Laszlo draw you in to experience his pain?*

A total of 80% strongly agreed; and 20% agreed. This indicates that the use of the point-of-view shot through Count Laszlo's eyes drew the viewers in to experience his pain, and to be better connected to Count Laszlo.

The second point-of-view question was: *Does the point-of-view shot through the eyes of the soldier writing in his book draw you closer to the events taking place?*

A grand total of 90% agreed; while 10% were neutral. This indicates that the viewers felt as if they were having the conversation with Count Laszlo to find out where he came from and why he was there.

The third point-of-view question was: *Does the point-of-view of Count Laszlo help to establish the placing of the two characters, and make you feel as if you were the one looking down on him?*

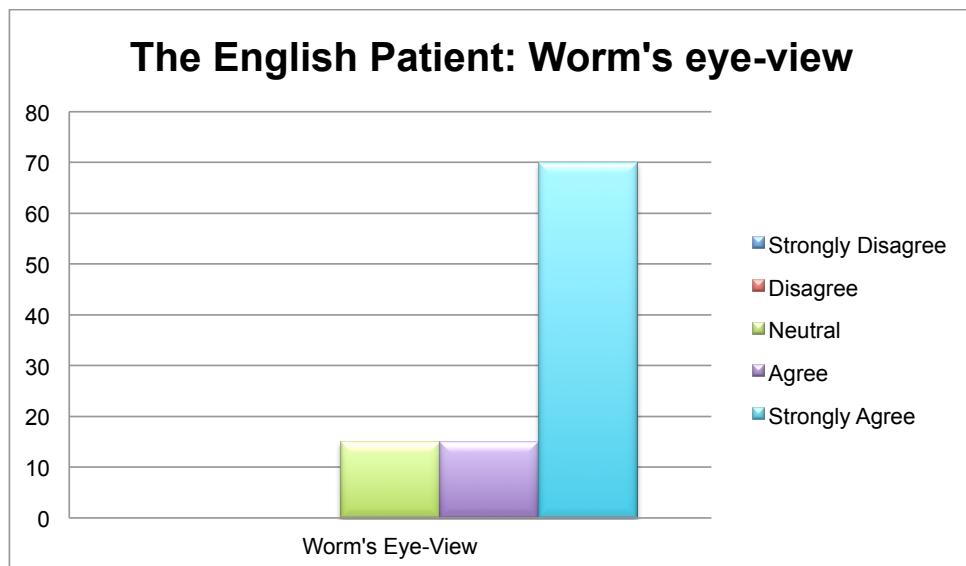
As many as 70% strongly agreed; while 30% merely agreed. This indicates that the use of the point-of-view shot helped the audience to feel as if they were in the building with Count Laszlo, and that they were looking down at his vulnerable body.

The fourth point-of-view question was: *Does the point-of-view shot of the book in the shelf draw you closer to Count Laszlo and the meaning that the book had for him?*

While 60% strongly agreed; 10% agreed; and 30% were neutral. This indicates that most of the viewers found that the book had a unique meaning for Count Laszlo, and that the 30% who were neutral might have missed the meaning.

#### 5.3.7. Worm's eye-view questions asked in *The English Patient* questionnaire

Figure 5.13 The English Patient – Worm's eye-view question



Two worm's eye-view questions were asked in *The English Patient*. Question (1) Does the worm's eye-view of the aircraft being shot down make you feel helpless as the action takes place? (2) *Does the worm's eye-view of the building on the mountain in the low light make it seem more impressive and dramatic?* The reason for question one was to determine whether the viewers found that the use of the worm's eye-view was to create a sense of helplessness by the viewer, rather than to show the power or strength of the aircraft.

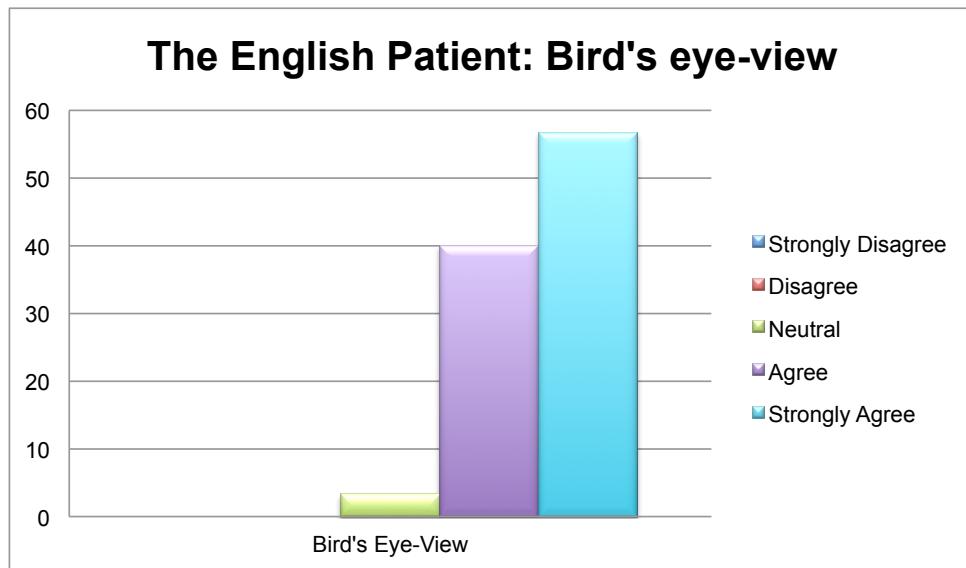
The use of the worm's eye view shot in *The English Patient* was to view the characters or the subjects from a very low angle. This helps the character or subject to seem taller, stronger or mightier. The worm's eye-view can also make a scene more dramatic and impressive than would a low-angle or eye-level shot.

As many as 70% of the viewers strongly agreed to the use of the worm's eye-view in *The English Patient*. While another 20% agreed; 15% remained neutral to the use of the worm's eye-view shot in *The English Patient*.

The viewers were also asked to give their opinion on this camera angle used to portray the aircraft being shot down. The viewers responded that the worm's eye-view shot was used to help indicate the type of situation in which the characters found themselves. They stated that the use of the worm's eye-view was probably more focused on the bullets flying past the aircraft, and to show the power and strength of the bullets, rather than being focused on the aircraft and its purpose.

### 5.3.8. Bird's eye-view questions asked in the English Patient questionnaire

Figure 5.14 The English Patient – Bird's eye-view question



The first bird's eye-view question asked was: *Does the bird's eye-view of the desert help to establish where the film is taking place?* This question was asked to determine whether the viewers were intrigued by the location, and by what the story might hold.

Only 20% strongly agreed; 70% agreed; and 10% were neutral. This indicates that most of the viewers found the use of the bird's eye-view shot of the desert useful to establish the location of the film.

The viewers were asked to give their opinion on this question. They stated that the bird's eye-view helped them to place where the action was taking place, and to be able to understand the reason for the various locations in the rest of the film.

The second bird's eye-view question was: *Does the bird's eye-view shot of the landscape and the army vehicles capture the surroundings and provide a fascinating perspective on the story itself?*

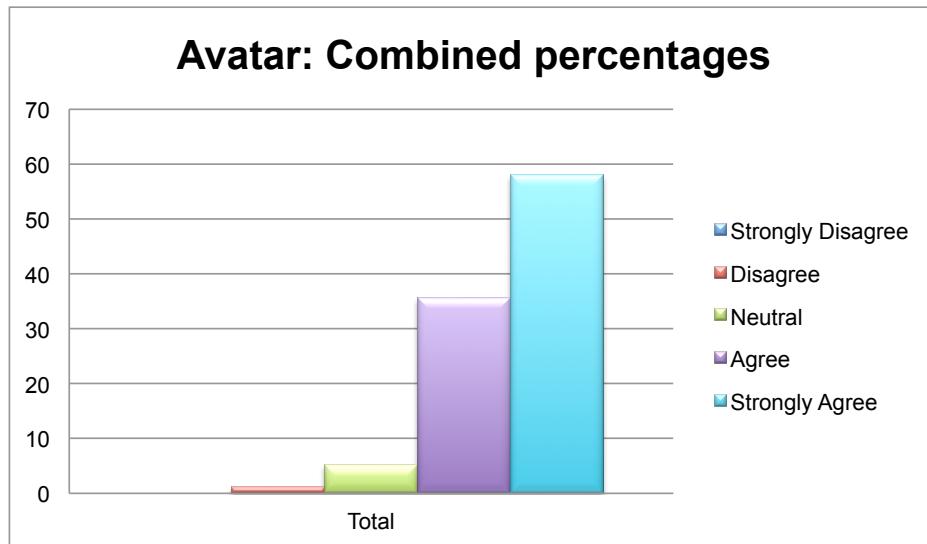
While 60% strongly agreed; only 40% merely agreed. This indicates that the use of the bird's eye-view shot helped the audience to establish where they were, and that it helped to tell the story.

The third bird's eye-view question was: *Did the bird's eye-view of Hana stacking the books serve to indicate the insignificance of the books to Hana as reading material?* This question was asked to determine whether the viewers thought that Hana had found reading in wartime to be insignificant.

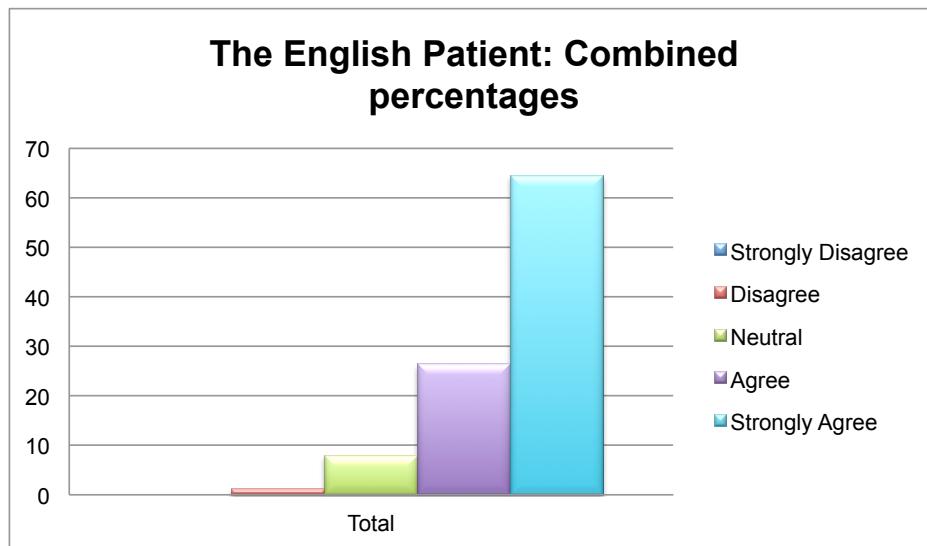
While as many as 90% strongly agreed; 10% were neutral. The viewers experienced the use of the bird's eye-view shot in this scene to be effective, in order to show that Hana found things, such as reading in wartime, as being unimportant.

#### **5.4 COMPARISON BETWEEN THE UNCONVENTIONAL CAMERA ANGLES USED IN AVATAR AND *THE ENGLISH PATIENT***

**Figure 5.15 Avatar – Combined percentages of the answers on all the questions asked in the questionnaire**



**Figure 5.16 The English Patient – Combined percentages of the answers on all the questions asked in the questionnaire**



It may be said that the unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient* were effectively used in the films, according to the participants of the focus group, as in both the films analysed, the highest ratings, which include the strongly agree and agree, fall between 90%-94%.

*Avatar* had 93.6% positive responses by the participants of the focus group for the suitable use of the unconventional camera angles in the film. The positive responses were determined by combining the strongly agree and agree answers together, as both were seen as a positive rating for the unconventional camera angle used. 5.2% of the viewers' responses to the unconventional camera angles used in the film were neutral. The viewers only experienced 1.2% of the unconventional camera angles as not being effectively used in *Avatar*. (The 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' answers were combined to determine the percentage of the appropriateness of the unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar*).

A total of 90.8% of the responses for *The English Patient* indicated that the unconventional camera angles used in the film were effectively used, according to the viewers. Only 8% of the viewers' responses were neutral regarding the

unconventional camera angles used in the film. The viewers did not experience 1.2% of the camera angles as being effective in *The English Patient*. This could indicate that the viewers found the use of the unconventional camera angles for a specific scene did not help to improve or portray the scene in a better manner.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided specific information on the various unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The questions helped to gather information on the opinions of the viewers in the focus group. This chapter also indicates that the meanings of Mascelli on various unconventional cameras can be applied in films – regardless of the genre or era in which they were made. The statistics also indicate that the viewers understood the use of the unconventional camera angles used in each film. They also found the use of the unconventional camera angles to be appropriate in representing each shot.

## Chapter 6

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### 6.1 BACKGROUND

In Chapter 1 the writer stated the following:

The quality of a film is strongly determined by its camera angles; and the story line is strongly positioned through the same. The message of each scene is also supported by the camera angle, and can decisively determine whether the scene and storyline were carried forward. The effective application of camera angles in films can sometimes be rewarded through awards, such as the Oscar for Cinematography. It is, however, not only an awards panel that should have this view; but it is more so the audience, the viewer, that should feel this way.

It was thus important to understand whether the audience shared this view with regard to award winning films. If it were found that they do, then it would be important to understand whether each scene was experienced, as stated by Mascelli, and tested against his theory. Should this be found to be true, then one could extrapolate that the current application of Mascelli's theory by cinematographers can and should continue. This chapter indicated whether this was found to be true; and it indicated through recommendations what could be done to ensure the implementation of the camera angles, as described by Mascelli.

Media aesthetics is an important part of filmmaking as it serves to create the various forms of media productions. Media aesthetics is the process in which a number of media elements are examined, such as sound and lighting, how these elements interact and how the viewer reacts to these elements (Zettl, 2010:4). Viewers judge these elements by how they are used to describe a specific aspect of an event. The viewer then judges these events by comparing one aspect of an event with another aspect of an event.

The viewer applies aesthetics to be able to find a way to order their surroundings into a foreground, a middle ground and a background. This would help the person to cluster certain event details together, to be able to form the object – no matter how close or how far the object is – into an understandable image. This can also help the person to determine the size, colour, form and type of the object they are seeing. When the person has stabilised their environment, she/he tends to select what she/he would like to focus on in that particular environment.

Thus it is important to analyse the various media aesthetics factors, such as sound and lighting when choosing a particular camera angle to portray the specific scene in the most appropriate manner so that the viewer can create order of what they are seeing.

## 6.2. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Chapter 5 indicated the viewers' overall interpretations of the unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. The graphs in Chapter 5 indicated that the viewers found the unconventional camera angles used in the films to represent the meaning of the shots appropriate; and they understood why each unconventional camera angle was used. The viewers' responses correspond with the meanings of the unconventional camera angles, as stated by Mascelli.

The overall findings of the unconventional camera angles used in each film indicate that the viewers found the unconventional camera angles used in *The English Patient* to be more representative of what the shots should consist of, than in the case of *Avatar*, if only measured against the 'Strongly Agree' rating (refer to Chapter 5 for more details).

If the 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' ratings are, however, combined, then *Avatar* seems to be marginally more significant in the overall use of the unconventional camera angles with a 93.6% rating, according to the participants of the focus group. *The English Patient* received 90.8% from the focus group for the use of the unconventional camera angles to represent the specific shots, when 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' are combined.

### 6.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The research question was: *“How do viewers’ interpretation of the functions of unconventional camera angles employed in Avatar and The English Patient agree when compared with Mascelli’s functional analysis of such angles?”*

Chapter 5 provides specific information on the various unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*, as well as how the meanings of Mascelli’s theory on unconventional camera angles can be applied. The participants in the focus group indicated that they understood the unconventional camera angles used in the two films; additionally, they found the use of the unconventional camera angles successful in representing each message of the storyline appropriately, according to the findings in Chapter 5.

As objective it was stated that: *“This study will draw a comparison between how viewers in a focus group see the functions of unconventional camera angles in Avatar and The English Patient with Joseph V. Mascelli’s functional analysis of camera angles in general, and unconventional camera angles in particular.”*

The objective of the study helped to define the purpose of the study, and to assist with the manner in which the study was arranged. The objective of the study was fulfilled in Chapter 5, with the comparisons made between how the viewers in the focus group viewed the functions of unconventional camera angles used in both *Avatar* and *The English Patient* compared with Joseph V. Mascelli’s functional analysis of camera angles in general, and his view on unconventional camera angles in particular.

#### 6.3.1 Mascelli combined with the end-results

Mascelli’s theory: A **high-angle shot** is when the camera is positioned to look down on the character or subject. A high-angle shot assists in showing the audience what is happening in the shot. A high-angle shot can be seen as a character, or the audience looking down at someone to enhance the stature of the person looking down; or it could indicate that the character being looked down upon is lonely, or they have a lack of power. It could also help the audience feel superior to a

character, when the camera is looking down on him/her; this helps to belittle a character.

The high-camera angle shot was used in both the films, to show the person being looked down upon as being lonely or having a lack of power, to help the audience keep track of the action that was taking place in the shot, and to help the viewers understand why certain things were happening in a shot or scene.

According to the viewers' responses to the questionnaires, they agreed that the high angles used in the both the films were used effectively in the above purpose.

Mascelli's theory: A **low-angle shot** is when the camera is placed below the eye-level of the character being shot. A low-angle shot is usually used to make the character being looked upon as more dominant, threatening or aggressive. Low-angle shots can help to inspire awe with the audience, when they are used to look up, for example, at an architectural building. The audience then experiences looking up at the object. The same goes for important people, such as the President, or even the hero in the story.

The low-camera angle shot was used in both the films to show the person or object being looked upon as more dominant or threatening, to make one object seem bigger than the other, to determine the importance of a character, as well as to intensify the drama.

The low-camera angles were used effectively in both films when compared with Mascelli's theory, according to the viewers' responses to the questionnaires.

Mascelli's theory: A **point-of-view shot** is used to show the audience what the character is seeing by making the audience see through the character's eyes. It is most effective to use a point-of-view, when the audience should be drawn closer to the events taking place. A point-of-view shot does not always have to be of a single character looking at something; but it can be shot over the shoulder of a character that can still be shown in the shot.

The point-of-view shots used in both the films were used to make the audience feel as if they were looking through one of the character's eyes, to draw the viewer closer

into the events that were taking place, and to make the viewer feel as if they were the characters.

According to the viewers' responses to the questions asked on the point-of-view shots used in both the films, they assessed that the point-of-view shots were used effectively to draw them into the film, and to make them a part of the action that was taking place.

The **bird's eye-view shot** was used to view the characters or scene from a high angle. The images being filmed were the same as that which a bird would see when flying over the scene, or looking down at the scene from a high viewpoint. A bird's eye-view helps to capture the surroundings, and to establish the placement of the subject or the characters. It also helps to give an interesting perspective on scenes of a car-chase or a building, for example.

The bird's eye-view shots used in both the films were used to help the viewers look at a specific area from a distance to see everything that was happening in the area, to intrigue the viewers, and to help the viewers establish where the action was taking place.

The viewers' responses to the questionnaires indicated that they found the use of the bird's eye-view shot in both the films as effective to establish the scene, and to help them view the area from a higher vantage point.

A **worm's eye-view** was used to view the characters or scene from a low angle. It was used to look up at an object or character, in order to make them seem taller, stronger or more powerful. A worm's eye-view helps to create a third perspective on a subject or character. Buildings or trees that are shot from a worm's eye-view look much more impressive and dramatic than when shot from eye-level, or even a low angle.

The worm's eye-view shots used in both the films were used to make the character or object seem taller, mightier or stronger.

According to the viewers' responses in Chapter 5, both the films effectively used the worm's eye-view shot to represent the character or subject, as indicated in the previous paragraph.

Mascelli's theory: The **eye-level shot** is when a cameraman composes a shot by considering (a) the size, and (b) the angle. The angle has a horizontal and a vertical axis. The closer to 90 degrees on the axis, the more normal or conventional the angle is, i.e. if we are seeing other people (objects) eye-to-eye. An eye-level shot is used when the viewers should be drawn into a specific shot, and also to help them understand the story line. The viewers then become a part of the shot and experience it from the same level as the character. Some eye-level shots help to dramatize the scene, which could cause more anxiety with the viewer.

The eye-level shots used in both the films were used to break away from the more commonly used unconventional camera angles (as described above), to dramatize the scene, and to create more anxiety for the viewer.

The viewers' responses indicate that they found the use of the eye-level shots used in both the films effective to help dramatize the scene, as well as to create more anxiety for them.

### **6.3.2 Limitations of the study**

A limitation of the study is the number of focus groups. Only one focus group was used; and hence, this makes it difficult to draw an overall conclusion on how viewers in general would feel about the use of the unconventional camera angles used in *Avatar* and *The English Patient*. This study can only accurately indicate how these viewers interpreted the unconventional camera angles used in both the films, and it cannot generalise these findings to the view of moviegoers in general. Although the high measure makes it possible to predict that they probably would feel much the same.

## **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

To ensure the effectiveness of a film, and the accurate representation of the meanings of camera angles and camera sizes, the way they are described by Mascelli should ideally be taken into consideration by future producers. Mascelli's

descriptions of camera angles and camera sizes, combined with the media aesthetics, as described by Zettl when successfully applied could lead to the production of a good-quality film and images in the film.

This study could have been done differently; or it could be repeated in a different fashion, such as through a quantitative analysis of the focus group's interpretations, or another theoretical perspective could have been used, or the measures and interpretations of the focus group could be done with someone other than Mascelli's theory on camera angles and unconventional camera angles, in particular.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

The study on *Mascelli's functional analysis of camera angles versus viewers' interpretation of unconventional camera angles in Avatar and The English Patient* helped to define the purpose of the unconventional camera angles in a film. A film's quality is strongly determined by the use of camera angles (and unconventional camera angles in particular) as well as how the story line is positioned throughout the story. The unconventional camera angles help to define the reason for a shot, as well as to help tell the story without making use of too much dialogue.

If the camera angles are successfully applied in a film, then a nomination for an award, such as the Oscar for Cinematography, becomes possible. Viewers play a very important role in determining whether the film effectively made use of the unconventional camera angles, and whether these camera angles helped to tell the story. Awards are also determined through an awards panel that analyses the film in a more technical manner.

It is thus important to understand whether the audience share this view with regard to award-winning films. It was found with regard to *Avatar* and *The English Patient* that they do. It is also important to understand whether the experience of each scene is as was intended, when tested against Mascelli's theory. Should this be found to be true, as it was with *Avatar* and *The English Patient* in this study, then one could extrapolate that the current application of Mascelli theory by cinematographers can and should continue.

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## ANNEXURE A - AVATAR

Number	Time		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	00:26-00:41	Did the bird's eye-view of the surroundings help to create an overall indication of the place where this story is being told?					
		Give your opinion on the use of an extreme long shot combined with the bird's eye-view.					
2.	01:42-01:52	Did the eye-level shot of the inside the Spaceship help to make the images seem more vertical and interesting?					
3.	02:22-02:31	Did the bird's eye-view of the aircraft and the planets give the scene a 3D-like quality?					
4.	02:35-02:38	Did the high angle of the box show you how easily a life can be taken; and the people lake's brother worked for did not care that he lost his life?					

5.	02:41-02:43	Did the subject's close-up shot help you as the viewer to experience the pain and loss Jake Sully is experiencing?				
6.	02:51-02:55	Did the high-angle shot of the aircraft and the surrounds interest you, as to what they are doing and where they might be going?				
		Give your opinion: Did the combination of the extreme long shot with the high angle help to create an atmospheric impression of the location?				
7.	04:58-05:06	Did the point-of-view shot of the soldiers running out of the aircraft make you as the viewer a part of the action taking place?				
8.	06:25-06:34	Did the low-angle of Jake Sully and the truck make the truck seem more dominant and threatening?				
9.	07:05-07:07	Does the low angle of Colonel Miles make him seem more threatening rather than someone with importance?				
10.	08:14-08:23	Did the eye-level shot of the laboratory help you to understand the story line better?				

11.	09:10-09:24	Did the eye-level shot of Jake Sully with his Avatar indicate how strong his interest is in his Avatar?		
		Give your opinion on the use of the medium close-up combined with the eye-level shot in this scene.		
12.	12:31-12:35	Did the worm's eye-view of Parker playing golf indicate his superior role in the film?		
13.	13:55-14:00	Does the eye-level shot of the rock help you to understand the reason why they are there?		
14.	16:21-16:26	Does the point of view of Jake as his Avatar help to portray what he sees when he is connected to his Avatar?		
15.	18:52-18:55	Did the worm's eye-view of Jake's Avatar make him seem stronger and mightier than when he is in a wheelchair?		
16.	24:20-24:24	Does the eye-level shot of the Pandora bird indicate what type of animals live on Pandora, and what these people are going to encounter?		

17.	24:34-24:40	Did the high-angle shot of the aircraft and the surrounds interest you as to what they are doing, and where they might be going?				
18.	25:09-25:11	Does the low-angle shot of Jake Sully jumping out of the aircraft help to indicate his authority as a soldier in this shot?				
19.	26:36-26:53	Does the bird's eye-view help to indicate the magnitude of Pandora?				
20.	27:02-27:08	Does the low-angle shot of Grace show her dominance in the group of people in the forest examining the tree?				
21.	27:42-27:57	Does the high-angle of the plants indicate their fragility when Jake touches them?				
22.	28:19-28:23	Does the low angle of the giant animal intensify the drama?				
23.	28:19-28:23	Does the low angle of the giant animal portray his aggression and dominance towards Jake?				
24.	29:28-29:31	Does the low angle of the beast behind Jake portray him as a threat towards the people?				

		Give your opinion: Did the combination of the low-angle shot with the close-up of the beast and Jake help to make you more intimately a part of the action taking place?
25.	29:31-29:33	Does the high angle of Jake indicate his lack of power towards the beast?

## ANNEXURE B – THE ENGLISH PATIENT

Number	Time	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	02:38-02:48	Does the bird's eye-view of the desert help to establish where the film is taking place?					
2.	02:53-02:59	Does the high angle of the aircraft imply a lack of power towards the characters and the aircraft?					
		Give your opinion: Which other camera angle was used to best portray this shot? (If you feel the other camera angle plays a role in defining the shot).					

3.	03:01-03:03	Does the eye-level shot of the two characters in the aircraft create more drama than that which a high-angle shot would?		
4.	03:01-03:03	Does the eye-level shot of the two characters in the aircraft create a bond between the viewers and the characters?		
5.	03:12-03:20	Does the low angle of the aircraft portray the aircraft as a threat to the people on the ground?		
6.	03:26-03:28	Does the worm's eye-view of the aircraft being shot down make you feel helpless, as the action takes place?		
7.	03:29-03:39	Does the eye-level shot of the burning aircraft and the characters inside it create more drama, and make you feel more connected to the characters?		
		Give your opinion on the use of the eye-level shot used in question 7.		
8.	04:50-04:54	Does the high-angle shot of Count Lazlo help to define what the story is all about, when seeing him in pain?		
		Give your opinion: Does the combination of the close-up shot with the high-angle shot help to eliminate all other non-essential elements that might have distracted your attention from Count Laszlo?		

9.	05:29-05:38	Does the point-of-view shot of Count Laszlo draw you in to experience his pain?		
10.	05:50-05:54	Does the high-angle shot of the army base make you feel detached from the characters, and as if you are looking down upon them from a third perspective?		
11.	06:48-06:50	Does the low angle of Hana make her seem superior and unconcerned about the actions taking place around her?		
12.	06:56-06:59	Does the eye-level shot of Hana crying on the ground draw you closer to her, to establish a relationship, and to be able to understand her pain?		
13.	07:20-07:26	Does the high-angle shot of the cave and the people help you to understand where they are and why they are there?		
14.	07:33-07:35	Does the eye-level shot of the man in the cave signalling help you to understand his soft nature and caring nature for the burnt man?		

15.	07:36-07:43	Does the high-angle shot of the man in the cave's hands and Count Laszlo's face help to make you more a part of the action taking place, as well as to feel as if you are taking care of Count Laszlo?				
		Give your opinion on which other camera angle was used to help improve the high-angle shot used in this scene.				
16.	08:37-08:40	Does the point-of-view shot through the eyes of the soldier writing in his book draw you closer to the events taking place?				
17.	08:40-08:44	Does the subject close-up eye-level shot of Count Laszlo make you feel a part of the conversation taking place between Count Laszlo and the soldier?				

18.	10:16-10:28	Does the low-angle shot of Hana and her friend talking in the cars make Hana seem important and special to her friend?				
19.	10:57-11:00	Does the eye-level shot of the car exploding create more drama in this particular shot?				
		Give your opinion: Would you have preferred a bird's eye-view shot of the car rather than an eye-level shot?				
20.	11:00-11:04	Does the eye-level shot of Hana and the exploding car in the background draw you closer to Hana and her situation?				
21.	14:37-14:41	Does the worm's eye-view of the building on the mountain in the low light make it seem more impressive and dramatic?				
22.	17:26-17:27	Does the point-of-view of Count Laszlo help to establish the placement of the two characters, and make you feel as if you were the one looking				

		down on him?					
23.	17:40-17:44	Does the bird's eye-view of the landscape and the army vehicles capture the surroundings, and provide a fascinating perspective on the story itself?					
24.	18:00-18:15	Did the bird's eye-view of Hana stacking the books help to indicate the insignificance of the books to Hana as reading material?					
25.	18:43-18:45	Does the point-of-view shot of the book in the shelf draw you closer to Count Laszlo, and the meaning the book had for him?					