

## The Development Of Makyong Acting Training Method For Environment Of Traditional Theater Courses

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to develop a Makyong acting training method based on the Malay tradition for enrichment in the North Sumatra Traditional Theater course at the UNIMED Performing Arts Study Program. In particular, this study aims to: (1) be able to interpret Malay advice as spiritual values; (2) identifying Malay dance techniques to prepare for body movements; (3) Identifying the Malay pantun tradition as the improvisational power of makyong actors. This study was designed with a research and development approach. This research was followed up by developing methods and applying methods in training and performances. In analyzing the data the author uses qualitative analysis techniques. As a reference in preparing the training model, the author uses the folklore approach, actor dramaturgical theory from Eugenio Barba and Asrul Sani's postcolonial acting approach as a reference in developing acting training methods.*

### KEYWORDS

*Training Model  
Makyong  
Acting  
Pantun  
Malay Dance*

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### INTRODUCTION

In theater lessons at Performing Arts Study Program, State University of Medan (hereinafter abbreviated as PSSP UNIMED which is an acronym for the Program Studi Seni Pertunjukan Universitas Negeri Medan), the dominance of western discourses is still very closely related to learning every semester and even thesis. These discourses seem dogmatic so that they have implications for the lack of attention of students to dig deeper into local discourse. In this regard, the use of western acting methods should be a space for theater students to interpolate local culture in order to project theater as a theater nationalization project. Such a process of work was once carried out by Asrul Sani in his commitment to nationalize theater by inserting Indonesian traditions into American acting methods (Winet, 2010:134).

A unique development like what Asrul Sani has done can be the right approach if the praxis of this finding is theater based on local culture. PSSP UNIMED has an acting laboratory course and a directing laboratory which aims to utilize idioms or traditional ideas to build a unique style of art creation. Students are encouraged to explore local potential and take inventory of cultures that intersect with traditional theater which is the center of learning. The aim of this course is to devise a formula for acting training and to produce experimental theatrical performances based on local traditions. Meanwhile, to achieve the objectives of this course students must master traditional theater and be able to collaborate with theories that have been studied previously.

Apart from that, PSSP UNIMED also has practical courses with the nomenclature of North Sumatra Traditional Theater. The course studies Makyong which is based on Malay culture as its learning material. In fact, this course refers to the mission of PSSP UNIMED as an agent working to revitalize arts and culture in North Sumatra (Admin Unimed, July 2, 2022). So that implicitly when students choose the class, students must understand the culture that is the basis of Makyong, namely Malay. According to the elaboration above, it can be seen that there is continuity from the two courses and basically produce two different outputs. The laboratory course utilizes tradition as material for directing and acting experiments, while the North Sumatra traditional theater course displays cultural identity as a representation of the community that owns the traditional theater.

From the field conditions that the author observed, the students who took the Makyong Tradition Theater class came from various ethnic identities including Toba Batak, Mandailing, Karo, Simalungun, Pakpak, Malay, etc. Meanwhile, the theater training programs that tend to be offered in Makyong classes are often not in line with class goals. The problem that often occurs is that students who come from different cultural or ethnic heritages find themselves limited in knowing Malay culture which is the basis of Makyong culture. Apart from that, Makyong performances also have certain conventions which, according to Tengku Luckman Sinar (2002:12), consist of; stories related to life in the palace, etc. From this convention, we can also draw a problem about how Makyong players become a representation of 'Malays'.

Parallel to the position of actors in modern theatrical performances, Makyong players are the most crucial division in a performance. The Makyong player is the main communicator on stage for the idea or story that the 'story maker' wants to convey. In this case the Makyong player must equip himself with various scaffolding at the individual level that can support his skills as an intermediary for the ideas of the director or storyteller. Therefore, a Makyong player must be an accomplished learner, an individual who is adaptive and has a wealth of experience in life, including philosophical and cultural knowledge because the task of the Makyong player is to represent the Malay community 'in the palace environment'. Makyong players must understand and master the pattern of life and etiquette that prevailed in the Malay sultanate. Apart from that, considering the tendency to play an improvisational role, Makyong players must master the inner and physical life of the Malay people. Makyong players must be able to elaborate on the concepts and all the tools of Malay community life which will be explored in presenting Makyong. Therefore, the author proposes an approach or method of matriculative acting training in which the aim is to increase student involvement in class and build basic assumptions that become principles in hegemonic culture in the Makyong tradition.

In this study, researchers used several perspectives from cultural studies to lead to an analysis of the body and its representation through the perspective of folklore, the perspective of actor dramaturgy (Barba, 2010), the perspective of postcolonial acting from Asrul Sani. These approaches refer to social and cultural orientations that are fundamental to the principles that apply in the acting method that researchers will develop.

From a folklore perspective, we can reveal how the mindset of a folk is and we can also explore the norms of life that apply to the collective society and how this folklore functions. William R. Bascom in Danandjaja (1991:19) explains several functions of folklore as; (a) a projection system of a society, (b) as a means of validating traditions and cultural institutions, (c) as a tool for providing education, (d) as a supervisor of norms that apply in society.

Departing from this view of folk, the author believes that students who incidentally will become Makyong performers in this course project must understand and internalize these folk values into their acting techniques.

After students understand the values or norms that apply to the Malay folk, students will inventory this knowledge into subscores that serve as impulses to organize the acting process. The subscore is the resonance of every movement, thought and intention of the character and the interpretation of the character's motivation (Zarrili, 2002:99). All data obtained by students regarding Malay folk is a requirement for organic action on stage and helps students to develop their inner life in playing the characters in the Makyong performance. In the sense that a subscore is something that is invisible to the naked eye but has an impact on the audience or the Malay community in general.

The sub-score becomes the basic capital for a Makyong actor who will play in a Makyong performance production both as an academic need and a creative process outside of lectures. The importance of this acting training approach also aims to inventory Malay traditional culture which can be developed into a North Sumatran tradition-based acting method because it is undeniable that the theater curriculum in Indonesia has an occidentalist tendency. In developing this training approach the author uses several Malay cultural traditions, each of which elements build awareness of actors, these elements are Malay philosophy or what can be referred to as demonstrations, Malay rhymes, basic Malay dance techniques. These three things become representatives of the inner aspect that encourages actors to produce original gestures or actions (Sani, 1960:5).

Considering the higher level of urgency for traditional theater (Makyong) lectures, the author will focus on developing an acting training method that can be utilized in Makyong lectures first. The author's considerations are first, dealing with multiethnic class conditions where students must be given the same provision to be able to present performances with a hegemonic culture in them. Second, in line with UNIMED's PSSP mission to revitalize North Sumatran art specifically in this article is Makyong.

## **METHOD**

Van Peursen (1980) mentions the method as an investigation of something with a certain plan. Planning is very important in a study so a systematic design is needed in order to get results that are in accordance with the target. This research was designed using the R&D (Research and Development) research method, namely research that was followed up with the development and dissemination of a model through a process of action, reflection, evaluation, replica and innovation that was carried out systematically and relatedly (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This research is described in several steps: 1) observation, 2) interviews, 3) data organization, 4) data analysis, 5) preparation of the method, 6) implementation of the method that has been designed.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In Makyong learning at PSSP UNIMED, students who take the course will be tasked with being actors in Makyong performances. But first, the writer will describe the general opinion or the most basic opinion regarding the actor's duties. Stanislavsky said that the actor's task is to create the inner life of the human soul, to reach the subconscious with full awareness, to realize emotional experience artistically and to run it. Meanwhile, in research conducted by Ribot and James-Lange, the aim of the training initiated by Stanislavsky is to

guide actors as expressive beings, articulate their actions coherently, carry out engagement with given conditions in production such as, "who", "where", "when", "what", and concerns certain languages (Blair, 2008: 51).

From the opinions above, we can understand how the understanding of the conditions given in the production of Makyong becomes the inspiration and driving force for the creativity of actors in playing the roles and moments that will be created. Actors will try to be fully involved in matters related to identity and cultural context that are in the character to be played to achieve psychophysical action. In this case, Makyong players have an attachment to Malay identity and cultural context which must be integrated into Makyong players. From Stanislavsky's training, success in acting can be achieved when actors find and use the right "score".

The score is a manifestation of the inner work done by the actor. The term refers to the structural design of the action, the precise detail of the action, dynamism and rhythm, as well as the orchestration of the organs of the body (Barba, 2010: 27). The score is also the actor's collaboration in the laboratory process with the director when producing the show. A good score will produce precise improvisational patterns in the actions performed by the actors. However, there is a more subtle unit of score, namely what is known as the actor subscore.

Subscores are the hidden scaffolding that actors have in designing their respective characters. The subscore is built on the actor's interpretation of the actions and intentions of the character to be portrayed, consisting of basic assumptions built from the cultural reality attached to the character. The Makyong actor's awareness of the subscore will make the actor re-examine his thoughts, intentions, and motivations of his Malay character. So that with this awareness the actor is able to create and animate the inner life of the character being played.

Moving on from the understanding that every actor must have an actor's dramaturgical set as discussed by Barba, the writer juxtaposes this thought with Stanislavsky's thoughts related to acting. The devices or subscores that Barba meant can be a provision for actors in completing the actor's work sequence, namely thoughts - emotions - actions. The series of work is the embodiment of Stanislavsky's system which is divided into two parts, namely mental techniques and physical techniques (Sani, 1960: 6). Inner technique is the first provision that comes from a spiritual source so that in order to give birth to an outward movement or expression it requires careful preparation of the soul of an actor.

First of all, for the actor's inner preparation, we must first understand the outlook on life of the characters contained in the Makyong performance. According to Suwardi (1991), studying the worldview and mindset of a people can lead to attitudes, behavior, behavior and actions. Acting as a 'Malay' requires inner preparation, spiritual knowledge based on Malay adab. Makyong is a traditional Malay theater whose aesthetics lead to the unanimity of the morals and adab of the author and the audience, meaning the Malay community itself (Sinar, 2018: 100). Makyong actor's inner preparation can be filled through spiritual learning resources that have been contained in *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu*.

### **Spiritual Knowledge**

Demonstrations for Malay are all kinds of advice, teaching, trust and role models that are beneficial to the life of the Malay community (Effendy, 2004: 7). Tenas Effendy as the documentation of *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* said that *Tunjuk Ajar Melayu* is a straight path that leads humans to Allah's blessings for the salvation of the world and the hereafter. The book



Tunjuk Ajar Melayu written by Tenas Effendy contains 39 themes including 29 themes about principles in life and 10 themes of advice. The 29 themes are related to obedience to God, parents and leaders. In addition to the theme of obedience, this theme also discusses social concepts that must be internalized by Malays in social life, such as sincerity, humility, gratitude, hard work, reciprocation, etc.



**Figure 1.** Manifestation of spiritual knowledge into improvisational abilities (Doc by: Ilham Rifandi, 2022)

Apart from that, Tenas Effendy (2004: xi), also describes his thoughts which are mentioned as "*sifat yang dua puluh lima* (twenty-five characteristics)" which are basically the points that conclude the Malay teachings. These properties are described as follows; (1) know the existence of God, (2) know how to return favors, (3) live in tolerance for each other, (4) self-reflect, (5) know oneself, (6) hold trust, (7) listen to wisdom, (8) grow up heart, (9) can stand dry or wet, (10) know how to show with berries, (11) know with shame, (12) remember with interest, (13) thrifty and careful, (14) know possessions, know borrow and return, (15) knows how to live and leave, knows how to die, bequeaths, (16) wrestles with water in a bucket, (17) rendang upholds good luck, (18) humbles upholding good luck, (19) is kind-hearted, (20) open arms, (21) respects -on, (22) charcoal threads, (23) against the sun, (24) hard pressed, diligently scavenge, (25) weighed with weights.

Following Tenas Effendy's conclusions regarding the characteristics of the Malay people, Borhan (2012: 71) also provides an overview of the characteristics and characteristics of the Malay people as follows; first, self-deprecating which means always being humble and not wanting to exaggerate oneself both in terms of order, language spoken, eating and drinking etiquette, walking etiquette and sitting etiquette. Second, the Malays are gentle, not exaggerated in their behavior and not lacking either. Third, is a person who has a value of simplicity. Fourth, the Malays are good at controlling feelings.

These characteristics are guidelines in life for the Malay community, but in fact their content cannot be measured and continues to develop according to the development of society. Demonstrations in the popular form can be varied and integrated into the repertoire of today's performance culture, as discussed in this article which places instructional teaching as a sub-score that actors must integrate into themselves. The inclusion of the spiritual values of a particular community will create something familiar to the memory of

that community (Bauman, 1992: 133). Likewise, the internalization of Malay teaching and learning in Makyong acting training can actually bring the actions created by Makyong actors closer to the actions of the Malay community. After the actor internalizes the concepts of life in the Malay community which are decomposed in the Malay teachings, the actor will learn how to convey them in accordance with the customs of the Malay community. The way to convey advice or advice to the Malay community tends to be varied, some are conveyed through satire, singing, jokes and what is most often used in Makyong performances is rhymes.

### **Malay Pantun As A Medium Of Expression**

By definition, pantun is a type of old poetry consisting of four lines with a-b-a-b rhymes (Zaidan, 1994: 143). The first and second lines are the sampiran and the third and fourth lines are the contents of the pantun. Based on the relevance of the content, rhymes are divided into two types; first, noble rhymes which place the first and second lines as content cues and second, non-noble rhymes which explain the absence of a semantic relationship between sampiran and content. In practice, sampiran is usually prepared in relation to the surrounding natural conditions while the content contains the intent to be conveyed. In the life of the Malay people, rhymes play a role in socializing, strengthening kinship ties, conveying people's aspirations and as entertainment.

Tenas Effendy said that pantun is a tradition that has been integrated into the life of the Malay people. Pantun is often displayed in various activities both in the context of traditional ceremonies, traditions and even in everyday life. In the dissemination of Malay values, pantun is used as a medium that is internalized by teaching and learning so that it gives birth to various types of rhymes such as advice rhymes, joke rhymes, compassion rhymes, traditional rhymes and satire rhymes. Each type of pantun is used based on the context of the event and the atmosphere. In the past, the ability to recite rhymes was not only owned by mature people such as traditional leaders, young people were also taught to master the ability to rhyme as conveyed in the saying; *kalau takut mendapat malu, pantun memantun hendaklah tahu*. In the Makyong performance, almost the entire duration is shown in rhyme conversation patterns. This means that actors who will take part in the Makyong performance must understand the role of pantun in the Malay tradition, what activities are performed in it, and how the Malay community translates their thoughts into pantun. Based on the results of an interview with the writer Tengku Ismail, who is *telangkai Melayu* (2022), if the rhyme conveyed does not contain noble values in it, it is called *menyalah* or just babbling.

In line with what is called by Suzuki (2015: 54) armed with true spiritual knowledge, actors can play with events and emotions (sensations) that they want to appear on stage. Makyong actors who have been equipped with Malay spiritual knowledge will be able to transform this knowledge into words in the form of rhymes. Finnegan in Bauman (1992: 121) states that in the pantun composition process there is no memorized text but purely as a creative process that the actor goes through. This is a process in which there is no established concept so that each rhyme performance will be transformed into a unique performance. Pantun is not only a matter of text because performatively it depends on its realization in performance.

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## Actor Body Training

According to Butler, the body is a marker of culture, the body also embodies history and implements the possibility of transformation into what an actor will become. Meanwhile, Pisk (1985) states that the actor's body is a tool for communicating the various feelings of the character being played. This means that through the body the actor must be prepared with various possibilities in presenting good information related to the story he wants to convey along with the cultural background that becomes his identity.

Even though actors in the training process already have complex spiritual and emotional provisions, when the external aspect is inadequate, the character that will be played will not be optimally achieved. The body becomes the executor for the actors so that preparation is needed through physical training that can be carried out by actors. Stanislavsky often adds dance exercises for his actors with the aim that the actors are able to express and incarnate the character's inner values so that the body reacts to the right actions (Pratama, 2019: 98). In this context, where Makyong actors will try to become Malay and must physically display the characteristics of the Malay body, training based on the movement tradition of the Malay people is needed. The author proposes this training in body training based on Malay dance. Related to that, Tuanku Luckman Sinar also stated that the Makyong players in the Makyong performance also danced using various Malay dance techniques such as *tapak* (steps) and *kirat* (turns) (Sinar, 2018: 67).

Basically, there are several steps that are often used in Makyong performances, namely: walking steps, waltzing, stopping steps, dance steps, triangular steps, rectangular steps and chasing or rushing steps (Sinar, 2018: 144). From the author's observation, these steps can be mastered through footwork training in Malay dance, including *langkah satu*, *langkah celatuk* (double step), *meniti batang* and *senandung kaki dari belakang*. As for hand movements, the author proposes to train *jumput* (women) and *kecak pinggang* (men) and *lenggang* movements. *Langkah satu* is a basic Malay dance technique that describes how to walk by taking one foot at a time. In principle, this movement always starts with the right foot. *Langkah celatuk* (double step) is performed in a matter of fast tempo or in Malay dance it is called *joget tempo*. The way to do this is to step on the right foot, followed by the left foot and close with the right foot (and vice versa). Directionally, it can be done in place, towards the front, back, forming a line of the letter "C" or "S".

The next technique is *meniti batang*, which is done by forming a straight line forward or backward. When taking a step, what must be considered is that the distance when going forward is the size of the sole of the foot and the heel of the front foot is located at the tip of the big toe of the back. When stepping backwards, the foot that is stepping back must touch the toes first, followed by the soles of the feet. As for the *senandung kaki dari belakang*, the direction of the footwork must follow the direction of the hand movement. For example, if the right hand moves to the right, then the right foot also steps right, followed by the left foot which is placed behind the right foot which is in a tiptoe position (and vice versa).

The *jumput* movement technique and the *kecak pinggang* are poses that are often displayed in Makyong performances and in the technique there are provisions for positioning the hands. *Jumput* is done by gluing the thumb with the index finger (like pinching) while the other three fingers are curved following the direction of the index finger (each finger is spaced). If the *jumput* is done at the groin, the movement is called *sing-sing*. If the left hand

is on the groin while the right hand is on the chest, the movement is called *tersipu malu*. *Kecak pinggang* is done by clenching the hand and placing it on the waist. *Lenggang* is a movement of the hand swinging back and forth like the condition of the hand when walking. The fingers tend to curl with the palms facing backwards and downwards.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Makyong acting training method is an alternative method of learning acting in traditional theater lectures at PSSP UNIMED, specifically the Malay tradition. This training method is an offer for the process of learning acting in Indonesia which still tends to be occidental and remembering a similar step that was taken by Asrul Sani to initiate an idea of 'nationalizing theatre'. Makyong as a traditional theater of the Malay community, in practice is a representation of the society so that in reality the actors who contribute to it must be able to present the complexity of the 'Malay people' through the spirit contained in the *tunjuk ajar Melayu* and their characteristics.

In communicating on stage, actors will be required to use the habits of the Malay people in communicating which are embodied in the habit of chanting. The habit of rhyming for the Malay community is an ideal way of communicating because by rhyming the meaning to be conveyed is not explicitly conveyed. In various conditions and events, pantun is a way of expressing good intentions to give advice, to be sarcastic, to be affectionate, etc. This also refers to the characteristics of the Malay people who are good at controlling their intentions and feelings so that their form of communication is manifested by reciprocating rhymes.

A flexible body will help the actor in presenting the right action. The actor's body not only displays text or story but also becomes a cultural marker. So that the actor's body must be ready to accommodate and express various cultural backgrounds in order to be able to convince the audience of the story being shown. The basic techniques of Malay dance form the basis of physical training which was specifically born from the creative womb of the Malay people themselves. Through physical training adapted from Malay dance movements, it is hoped that actors will become more flexible in transforming themselves into Malays.

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