

UNDERSTANDING INDONESIAN ANIMATED FILM CHARACTERS THROUGH BELIEVABILITY THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to understand the believability of the characters in the Indonesian animated film entitled Roh Garuda Go. Descriptive research method is used to get an overview of the creation of the main characters in the film Roh Garuda Go. The first part of this study involves making observations about Indonesian animated movies and the protagonist of Roh Garuda Go. A literature review on animated movies and plausibility, as well as observations of the characters' behavior in the chosen sequences, were done to examine the characters in the movie. Visualization of characters in animated films will simultaneously be accompanied by the hope of forming visuality in the audience. The main characters of this film are designed to represent the Indonesian nation's motto Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. The concept of visualization refers to the five symbols of the Pancasila precepts. By applying the principles of readability and clarity to movie sequences, the interpretation of visuality is achieved. The result is a finding of understanding between the creation of the character and the audience's response to the animated film character Roh Garuda Go. The conclusions obtained are in the form of input to animated film makers regarding the considerations taken for the creation of fictional characters, especially the animated film Roh Garuda Go.

Keywords: *animation, believability, characters, Indonesia*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Animated films are growing positively in Indonesia. This industry contributed revenue of IDR 602 billion in 2019, an increase of 153 percent from the revenue figure of IDR 238 billion in 2015 (AINAKI, 2020). This fantastic figure shows an average increase of 26 percent per year. From time to time new and worldwide animated film titles appear, including Candy Monster (2020), Knight Kris (2017), Kiko and Friends (2016), and Battle of Surabaya (2015) (Dhanesworo, 2022). This condition is interesting, considering that the films in circulation show a wide variety of themes. In addition, there are various interpretations of characterizations. Research by Ekawardhani and Santosa (2017) highlights the existence of a paternalistic concept in the Somat character from the film Keluarga Somat. Meanwhile, Sloan (2015) states that one of the fundamental theories to be taken into consideration relates to the preceding one of the other in order to comprehend and evaluate how

virtual characters are designed in terms of how they represent ethnic, religious, or national ideals. This shows that there is a fictitious dynamic of animated film characters. According to Said in Sloan (2015) the theory by orientalism, Europeans and North Americans have basically manufactured beliefs about Asian (and particularly Middle Eastern) cultures. However, animated film makers in Indonesia are trying to create a picture of Indonesian society through their animated films.

The fictional characters are found in various media, such as comics, animated films, and games. This term refers to the definition of a character's internal experience of the effects of his actions and feelings on himself, without the author making any commentary on the character, in order to let the reader better comprehend the character's traits (Holman, 1986). Referred to as fiction refers to the qualities that are attached, both in the form of morals, mental attitudes, behavior, preferences for values, including the way the character is presented. In this article it is mentioned as believability theory. This theory is used to strengthen the quality of fictional characters, related to their function as role carriers in a narrative or storytelling in certain media (Ekawardhani, Santosa, Ahmad, & Irfansyah, 2020).

The existence of animated film characters in the Indonesian animation world cannot be separated from the values carried by the creators. The variations of making Indonesian animated film characters are very diverse, including the films shown on the internet. 2018 was the first year for short animated films to appear on social media, such as Si Nopal, Dalang Pelo, Om Perlente, and several other titles. These titles are live on Instagram, and get high appreciation. It can be seen from the number of followers of Dalang Pelo on Instagram reaching 3.5 million, while Si Nopal reaches 2.1 million. In addition to Instagram, animated films are also shown on the YouTube channel. One of the films that received great appreciation was the short animated film on Vernalta's account. Currently the account has 3.13 million subscribers. The films that are screened are about 1 minute in duration, comedic type with a humorous style that tends to be sarcasm. The films on Vernalta's account are made very simply and do not show the sophistication of animated films that tend to be complicated. That is, the interpretation of animated films that are well appreciated by the audience is very diverse.

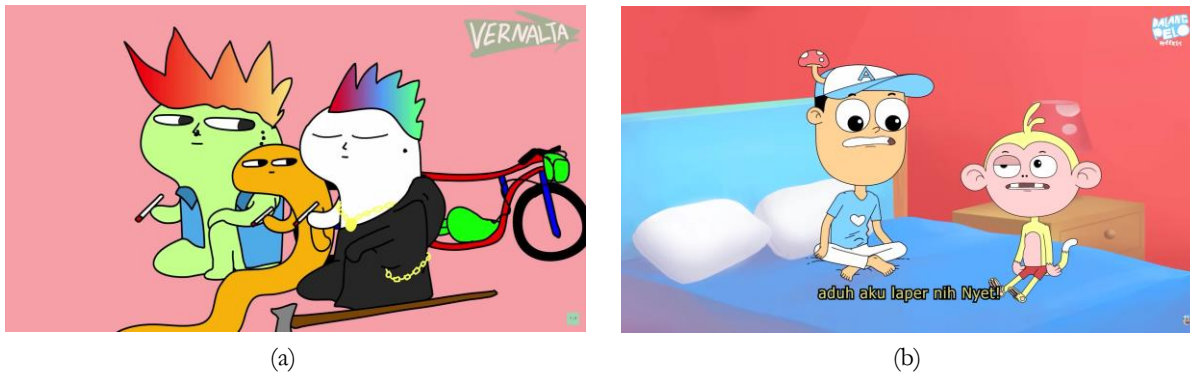


Figure 1. Animated films on the accounts of Vernalta (a) and Dalang Pelo (b)

The YouTube channel is an option for showing animated films, either through official accounts or in the form of reposts. The film that is the object of research in this article is Roh Garuda Go. Animated film by Ricky Ramadhan Setiawan, a DKV study program student from the State University of Malang. This work has been made since 2014 and won a bronze medal at the 2015 National Student Scientific Week (Pimnas) activity, while in the same year it won first place in the Asean Youth Creative Industry (AYCIF) in ASEAN (Adhi, 2016). Interestingly, this animated film, according to the maker, translates the concept of Pancasila (Adhi, 2016).

B. METHOD

This article uses descriptive analysis method, with an art based research approach. Finding a description or outcome of an event, situation, behavior, issue, or phenomenon in society is the goal of descriptive research (Sugiyono, 2007). Creative works based on principles are incorporated into social research projects through art-based research (ABR). This method facilitates the comprehension of inventive ideas in a visual work (Leavy, 2017). Research based on the notion that social scientific objectives can be facilitated by the arts and humanities. An "aesthetic intersubjective paradigm" that is founded on sensory, emotional, perceptual, kinesthetic, tactile, and imaginal methods of knowing develops in the setting of works of art. Relationships between humans and nature in works of art define what knowledge means (Leavy, 2017).

Animated film as a product departs from a complicated process. In this study, animated films are positioned as products that arise from creative thinking. This means that this film is not placed in the context of its production, but in the area of its creation idea. One aspect that is considered interesting, refers to the statement by the maker regarding the concept of Pancasila which was merged into the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika". This concept is translated into the depiction of the characters

in the animated film *Roh Garuda Go*. To discuss the creation of characters, believability theory is used. This theory highlights the existence of human qualities that are added to film and game characters (Maldonado and Hayes-Roth, 2004). Lee and Heeter (2012) define believability as the occurrence of measuring and growing the nature of the cognitive gap between the player's experience and the expected character. In this case, if it is associated with animated films, believability creates space for the audience to give interpretations to the characters they see.

Animated films according to Pikkov (2010) consist of eight constituent elements, namely time, structure, character credibility, realism, storytelling, space, character, and sound. These eight elements are simplified into three aspects, namely visual aspects (character, character credibility, and voice), thematic aspects (storytelling, space, time, and structure), and their constituent aspects (realism). The first stage is to observe the second episode of the animated film *Spirit Garuda Go*, entitled "Menumpas Kejahatan ala Kesatria Garuda". The second stage, the discussion in this article is limited to the visual aspect, especially the characterizations and credibility. In simple terms, it can be stated if believability allows to understand the characterization aspect. The deepening of the characters in the film *Roh Garuda Go*, first the characters are seen separately from the film. In the characterizations there are criteria for the main character and the peripheral character (Atar Semi in Wicaksono, 2017). The main character takes a large portion in the storytelling, both as the perpetrator of the incident and the subject of the incident (Nurgiyantoro, 2017). The main characters in this film are represented by four main characters, namely Bhi, Nekka, Tongga, and Leika. Seeing the character's character can be traced through three aspects, namely (1) character dialogue, (2) character explanation, and (3) physical depiction (Siswanto, 2008). This study limits the understanding of characters through physical descriptions and explanations of characters.

The deepening stage of the characters in the film can be seen through their appearance on the scene. This is explored by looking at the clarity and readability of the character with the surrounding environment (Pluralsight, 2014). The placement of characters in the scene greatly determines the legibility of the audience. There are two defining aspects, namely exaggerated poses and gestures. This has an impact on the quality of believability to be presented to the audience.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tracing the creation of characters through believability is based on two main aspects, namely visualization and visuality (Ekawardhani et al, 2020). While visualization emphasizes character traits that will provide the viewer an emotional experience, visualization focuses on the visual creation of characters. Character designs are created as part of visualization. Includes all the characteristics that

make up the character, as well as any additional traits like attire and accessories. While the viewer is given a visual experience of the characters developed through screen media. Visualization follows the physical depiction and explanation of characters. When referring to the believability theory, visualization consists of appearance, including identity, backstory, physical appearance and character, in the form of content and way of speaking (Lee & Heeter, 2012; Maldonado & Hayes-Roth, 2009). Understanding the context of visualization using Carl Gustav Jung's archetypal theory approach. Archetypes in this sense are understood as unconscious content that is transformed by being conscious and perceived, and taking its expression from the consciousness of the individual in which it arises. (Jung, 1980). So, the placement of characters in a storytelling will be easy to understand when they are described as having certain mental and moral qualities. While visuality emphasizes more on the visual experience received by the audience, in this case in the form of intentionality or gestures, emotions, and social relationships in the form of patterns of social interaction, roles and dynamics (Lee & Heeter, 2012; Maldonado & Hayes-Roth, 2009). Seeing this context, the discussion about the characters emphasizes the interpretation of the appearance of the four characters, as well as the interactions of the characters in the scene.

The termination of the screenshot is determined based on the criteria for the presence of the character as a whole and the presence of gestures that clearly indicate actions to other characters. Previously, it should be explained that research on the animated film Spirit Garuda Go has been carried out by Andreas Syah Pahlevi from the Visual Communication Design Study Program, State University of Malang, regarding the interpretation of the appearance of characters based on each precept in Pancasila (see Figure 2). This research is interesting, considering that the idea of Pancasila needs to be interpreted continuously, especially to the younger audience. This can be part of efforts to maintain pride in the basis of the Indonesian state from time to time. However, this research which refers to De Bono's concept of lateral thinking emphasizes the subjectivity of the researcher to character design.



Figure 2. Interpretation of Pancasila precepts through the animated film character Roh Garuda Go (Pahlevi, 2018)

The film *Roh Garuda Go* contains five main characters who represent the five precepts in Pancasila (Pahlevi, 2018). However, in the second episode of this film, one of the characters, namely Esa, has not appeared, so this article explores the four characters who have appeared in the second episode. The selection of this episode sees that each character has shown mental and moral qualities, so that archeically it appears his position in the film. Jung relates symbols from different cultures are often very similar because they have emerged from archetypes shared by the whole human race which are part of our collective unconscious. Archetypes can appear in literature, art, religion, or dreams and have universal implications across all cultures. Archetypes in Jung's theory include persona, shadow, anima, and animus, and self (McLeod, 2018). Recent studies imply that, rather than being completely biological, archetypes are representations of linguistic or cultural traits that directly arise from our experiences (Young-Eisendrath, 1995; McLeod, 2018).

Referring to Young-Eisendrath and McLeod's statement, the interpretation of the characterizations cannot be separated from the characteristics that are built from the concept of archetypes. Each character is shown as a persona, namely the public face we put on is called a persona (or mask). What is shown through this character gives comfort to the audience. Regarding the characterizations, these four characters appear to have the expected traits, namely to become the leading role in the film. Bhi, Nekka, Tongga, and Leika are characters who have different personality, but have the qualities to be in the position of a hero. It can be seen in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3. (a) Bhi, (b) Nekka, (c) Tongga, & (d) Leika

The four characters are described as having qualities as the main role, namely having courage and a sense of justice. Each character is also described as having a companion archetype, such as anima and animus. Due to their long history of cohabitation, both sexes exhibit the attitudes and behaviours of the other. The animus archetype represents the masculine side of a woman's mind, and the feminine side of a man's psyche (the anima archetype). This can be seen in Leika's character, which is depicted as a girl, who also has courage and fighting ability. Or Tongga, who is depicted as a big man, but shows an excessive fondness for food. It can be seen in Figure 4. In addition, there is self, which offers a sense of experience's oneness.



Figure 4. Leika is able to use weapons to fight (Movie Mazzeh di <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z4kgBVmCdo&t=1175s>)

Leika's depiction is persona as one of the main characters, accompanied by animus archetypes in the form of strong and brave characteristics. In Pahlevi's research (2017) it is stated that Leika is the embodiment of the symbol of the fifth precept in Pancasila. Shown through a rice-shaped stick and the neck that resembles cotton. However, the interpretation of Leika in an archetypal context is the animus archetype, namely the existence of a masculine side in women. In this second episode, one

of the characters, Nekka, is described as having the archetype of shadows. A condition for the emergence of the animal side in the human personality, which is a source of creativity as well as destructive (McLeod, 2018). Nekka is depicted attacking Bhi using a dagger that has been possessed by a curse. Seen in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Shadows Nekka attacking Bhi (Movie Mazzeh di <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z4kgBVmCdo&t=1175s>)

Interestingly, in this film, the filmmaker's awareness of the characterizations is not solely based on the rigid position of the character. Each main character is described as a person who has a combination of archetypes. This means that the maker of this animated film does not merely put the main character as a persona who is seen as one side only. But there is another dimension as a companion. And, of course, each character is shown differently.

In addition to the appearance of the characters, this film also strengthens believability through the principle of clarity in the scene in order to build readability for the audience. The spirit of Garuda Go gives appearances that show clarity, especially in the gestures or poses of the characters in the scene. Pose is an important aspect to show the clarity of movement. Having a strong silhouette is a way to show that the pose is clear (Pluralsight, 2014). One of Nekka's poses can be seen in figure 6.

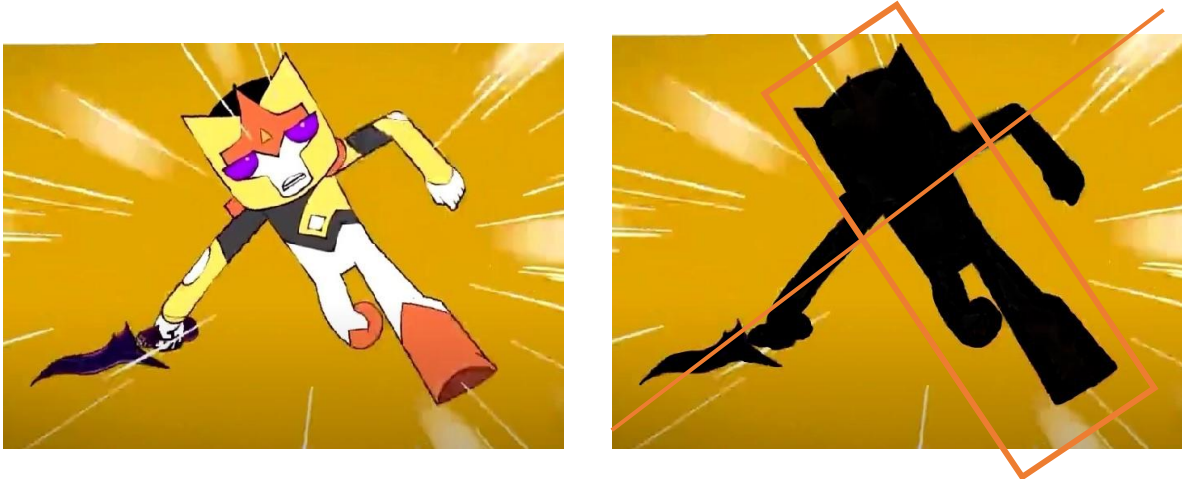


Figure 6. Nekka's pose when running and Nekka's shadow shape (Movie Mazzeh di <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z4kgBVmCdo&t=1175s>)

Clarity in Nekka's movement emphasizes the action of running and attacking scenes. In addition to pose clarity can also be seen through exaggerating. Exaggerating is an act of exaggeration to strengthen the readability of the scene. Exaggerating in figure 6 can be seen through diagonal shooting. It's often necessary to push a concept or stance until it's crystal apparent in order to put the audience to be able to read an action or feeling clearly (Pluralsight, 2014). This can be seen in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Bhi fighting with Nekka (Movie Mazzeh di <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z4kgBVmCdo&t=1175s>)

Figure 7 shows Bhi fighting with Nekka covered in a lump of dust. The emergence of a lump

of dust to strengthen the occurrence of hitting and kicking each other, causing the ground or gravel below to fly around them. The commotion of this scene was added to the pose of Leika beating the drums. However, in this scene Bhi and Nekka's position is in the middle, adjacent to Tongga's position who is standing on the left. Tongga's massive body prevented the two from moving any further. Exaggerating in this scene emphasizes the feud between these two characters. Another scene that shows clarity is shown in figure 8.



Gambar 8. Bhi, Nekka, Tongga, dan Leika berpelukan (Movie MazzeH di <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z4kgBVmCdo&t=1175s>)

Figure 7 shows the four figures embracing, supervised by the teacher named Ghanda. Exaggerating can also be shown through expressions and emotions or reactions to a situation. Although this scene didn't show any overreaction or emotion, it could be seen that every character displayed a clear emotion of joy.

D. CONCLUSION

The characterizations in the film *Roh Garuda Go* don't just stop at making designs. Physical depictions accompanied by character explanations are contained through additional moral and mental qualities reinforced by the presence of archetypes. The placement of archetypal combinations not only strengthens the appearance, but also the ability to engage the audience. Interpretation of character design is a way of showing the quality of transferring ideas into character visualization.

The strengthening of believability is obtained through visuality in the form of the use of clarity

which leads to the quality of readability in animated film scenes. Taking pictures, using poses or gestures, and exaggerating scenes are ways for filmmakers to demonstrate readability. So that it strengthens believability in the film *Roh Garuda Go*.

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