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**Wayang Properties in The Use of Indonesian and  
Javanese**

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# Wayang Properties in The Use of Indonesian and Javanese

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## Abstract

“Wayang” (puppet) is one of the most popular traditional performances in Indonesia. The story, originally from India, has undergone transformations, and the Indonesian people have regarded it as their own, instead of foreign to the community. More over, for many Indonesian people, wayang stories differ to other stories in that they present ethics and moral teachings as an important provisions for way of life. The central role played by wayang renders wayang properties easily accessible in many aspects of social life, and the use of language is no exception. This paper will accordingly discuss the properties of wayang reflected in the use of Indonesian and Javanese. The data are collected through observing the use of Indonesian and Javanese for talking and discussing wayang matters and referring, naming, or comparing everything surrounding their lives. The data are further classified on the basis of their speech type modalities. As far as the wayang properties are concerned, there are at least three types of language use, i.e. literal, metaphorical, and symbolic. These types of languages are used by society for referring, symbolizing, and comparing various social aspects, states, and activities of a community’s daily life. All of these matters have not so far been revealed by scholars who use wayang as the object of their study (Nurhayati, 2005 and Hazim, 1991). More specifically, the use of wayang properties as the source domains of metaphorical expressions has not been discussed by linguists who have conducted significant studies on metaphors (Wahab (1990, 5) and Wijana (2016, 56-67)

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*Keywords:* wayang, properties, literal, symbolical, and metaphorical

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## Introduction

Balinese and Javanese younger generations, owing to global era impacts, rarely watch

wayang performance. They enjoy more modern art performances, such as popular music bands and dangdut, rather than their traditional heritage performances. More strikingly, most youth no more understand the stories and several of the language styles used in the wayang narratives. Therefore, it is not surprising if that many can not correctly identify or name most of the wayang characters. They are more familiar with fantastic superheroes, such as Batman, Superman, Spiderman, and the Hulk.

Older generations, however, who are fond of watching wayang performances, consider that wayang stories are different from other stories. Wayang stories contain truth and invaluable moral teachings whose quality is not significantly different from other teachings found in religious holy books. The long tradition of the wayang story, either delivered orally or in forms of written texts, render all matters related to its properties easily accessible in every aspect of Indonesian community life. Despite this, the hints of wayang narrative extinction are undeniable.

## Literature Preview

Expressions of everything related to wayang performance, in this paper will be called “wayang properties”, and has not so far been revealed by scholars who pay attention to issues of wayang performance. Most scholars study other aspects of wayang. Amir (1991) discusses at length moral and ethic values contained in wayang. Kaelola (2010) and Sudjarwo et al. (2010) describe physical and moral wayang characters together with the etimological meaning of their names. Van Groenendael (1985) carried out a deep study on the life road map of a puppeteer (dalang), including his training, genealogy, style and stylistic variants, court circles, performance arrangements, performance occasions, and social status in the community. Sumintarsih et al. (2012) study the role of wayang topeng (mask dance) as a means of inheriting traditional values. They only pay very little attention to language use. One profound study concerning language use in wayang performance is Nurhayati’s doctorate thesis (2005), who employs a sociolinguistic framework. Her discussions focus on sociolinguistic patterns of repertoires used in Javanese leather puppet shows performed by the late Timbul Hadiprayitno, one of Yogyakarta’s famous puppeteers. Kadarisman (1999) studies the use of wayang properties by the master of ceremonies in Javanese traditional wedding narratives. The master of ceremonies commonly compares the weddings with “Arjuna Wiwaha” (Arjuna’s royal wedding).

## Theoretical Framework

Language serves many functions in human life. However, language experts can only mention several of these. Brown and Yule (1989, 1-2), in their account of language function, differentiate two language functions, i.e. transactional and interactional. The first is related to the use of language for expressing ‘content’, and the second to the use of language for expressing social relation and personal attitudes. These functions are in line with the functional dichotomies: ‘representative and expressive’ used by Bühler (1934), ‘referential and emotive’ by Jakobson (1960), ‘Ideational and interpersonal’ by Halliday (1970) and ‘descriptive and social expressive’ by Lyons (1977). In the later development these dichotomies have changed considerably. Jakobson (1960) extends these with four other functions, such as conative, phatic, metalingual and poetic (see also, Siregar (2011, 4). In relation to first language acquisition,

Halliday as quoted by Siregar (2011, 4) mentions seven functions of language, i.e. instrumental for exploiting the state of making something happen; regulatory for controlling the situation, representational for making statements and explaining reality; interactional for sustaining social relations; personal for expressing feelings; heuristic for studying sciences; and imaginative for creating imaginative ideas. All of these indicate that the kinds of function the language exhibits may differ considerably depending on the use of language.

## Research method

The research is carried out by observing the exploitation of wayang characters and their environment, in Indonesian and Javanese languages, either in formal or informal speech situations, and in both oral or written forms. With regards to wayang properties, my findings show that the use of language in which wayang properties are exploited, can be distinguished into three main categories; language used to serve representative, metaphorical, and symbolic functions. These matters will be described in the research findings below.

## Research Findings

### The Representative Function

The representative function is more or less the same as the transactional, ideational, or instrumental function. In this matter, language is used for interpreting human experiences. By this function, human beings can understand realities. Halliday describes this as “language content function.” As far as wayang properties are concerned, the characters of wayang and other things related to them are only used to refer to their literal meanings. For a clearer explanation, see the following Indonesian sentences (1) (2), and (3), extracted from Amir (1991), and Javanese sentences (4), (5), and (6) are my own creations.

- (1) Secara garis besar dalang adalah seorang seniman komplit karena menguasai “kawruh”, yakni ilmu yang bertalian dengan pedalangan (p. 81).  
‘Principally, a puppeteer is a complete artist because s/he masters “kawruh”, i.e. all knowledge related to shadow puppetry’
- (2) Wayang juga memberikan santapan intelektual bagi mereka yang mau berpikir lebih serius (p. 78).  
‘Wayang also gives intellectual enlightenment for whoever wants to think more seriously’
- (3) Juga dilambangkan oleh keteraturan alam semesta seperti dilihat Bima dalam perut Dewi Ruci (p. 150).  
‘...are also symbolized by the order of the universe as seen by Bima in Dewi Ruci’s womb’
- (4) Aku dhek wingi nonton wayang.  
‘Yesterday I saw a wayang performance’
- (5) Aku kenal karo dhalang.  
‘I am acquainted with the puppeteer’
- (6) Semar, Petruk, Gareng, lan Bagong iku kabeh jeneng punokawan.  
‘Semar, Petruk, Gareng, and Bagong are all clown’s names’

### The metaphorical function

In many speech situations, the use of wayang properties is intended to compare these with other realities in human life. As result, the use of community languages in which wayang

traditions are massively involved will be crowded with metaphorical expressions using wayang properties as source domains. The source domains can relate either to the most generic term, such as wayang 'puppet', and everything associated to wayang, such as the dalang 'puppeteer' to figuratively refer to people and God, or the creator who disposes people's destiny, as shown in (7).

- (7) Manusia itu hanya wayang, Tuhan adalah dalangnya.  
'People are just puppets, and God is the puppeteer'

In (8), (9) and (10), we see more specific terms, i.e. wayang characters, Bima sakti 'powerful Bima', Bagong 'big eyed clown', and a story event, Barata Yuda 'Kurawa and Pandawa big fight' are respectively used to refer to galaxy, milky way, big, and family quarrels, all containing certain similarities.

- (8) Galaxy kita disebut Bima sakti.  
'Our galaxy is called Bima sakti'
- (9) Aku aqua yang ukuran Bagong aja.  
'I would like the mineral water of big size'
- (10) Wah tadi ayah dan ibu Barata Yudha.  
'Oh, there has just been a serious quarrel between father and mother'

Below are examples of metaphorical and idiomatic expressions using wayang characters and their body parts as the source domains and their intended target domains. The source domains are presented on the left and the target domains on the right side.

- (11) Anak semata wayang 'wayang single eye' >> 'the only child'
- (12) Tangan Gareng 'Gareng's hand' >> 'tie rod' (car spare part)
- (13) Mata Bagong 'Bagong's eyes' >> 'one and one of a domino card figure'.
- (14) Irung Petruk 'Petruk's nose' >> 'long pointed road bend in Gunung Kidul'
- (15) Bokong Semar 'Semar's buttock' > 'big road bend in Gunung Kidul'
- (16) Kuku Bima 'Bima's nail' >> 'energy drink brand'
- (17) Durian Petruk 'Petruk durian' >> 'long and tasty variety of durian fruit'
- (18) Helm Cakil 'Cakil helmet' >> 'helmet with long lower part like Cakil's protruding lower jaw'
- (19) Srikandi Indonesia 'Srikandi from Indonesia' >> 'three Indonesian olympic woman archers'
- (20) Sasrabahu 'name of strong wayang character' >> 'strong construction of fly over pillars'
- (21) Bala kurawa 'Kurawa's group' >> 'indecent, impolite group of people'
- (22) Wayang kepadaman damar 'like puppet performance out of lamp' >> 'disorderly situation'

### The symbolic function

Different from the metaphorical function, in serving the symbolic function, wayang properties are used as proper names to label many things, such as villages, roads, personal names, etc. As proper names, there is no similarity between the linguistic signs and the entities (village, building, road, or person) they signify. However, there are such kinds of putative relations that hold between the signifier and the signified. By this relation, the name creators have expectations that the entities and everything related to them will be effected in the same

way as wayang characteristics assigned to them. Accordingly, only the wayang properties with good connotations are used to label these. These phenomena are easily found in Indonesian and Javanese communities. For example, in eastern Yogyakarta, several village names end with Martani. This word has undergone phonological changes from its Sanskrit origin *amartani* meaning 'life'. In wayang performance Amarta is a kingdom of good knight characters, Pandawa. Meanwhile, Astina, the kingdom of Kurawa, the bad side counterpart is never used for these purposes. Some of those village names which can still be found until the present day are Selomartani 'stone of life', Sindumartani 'river of life', Tirtomartani 'water of life', Bimomartani 'strength of life', Purwomartani 'the beginning of life', etc. Other village names using wayang properties in Yogyakarta are Pandawaharjo 'the great Pandawa', Pringgodani 'Gatotkaca's kingdom', Sokoliman 'Drona's village', etc. In the last example, Drona is perceived by the Javanese as Pandawa's teacher who masters warfare. Previously, wayang characters were used to name Hindhu temples. Several temple names in the Dieng temple complex, in central Java, use wayang characters, i.e. Candi Arjuna 'Arjuna Temple', and Candi Semar 'Semar temple'.

### Closing Remarks

Wayang as an invaluable element of cultural heritage which is still performed in some Indonesian communities, has an important role in building social identity. It is an inseparable part of the national culture. The linguistic expressions which mainly refer to wayang characters, body parts, places, weapons and everything related to the wayang world are expressed literally, metaphorically, and symbolically. These expressions are used to name or persons as well as to label places, public buildings, merchandise, streets, organizations, and associations. The use of these is essentially a reflection of local or national wisdom for fulfilling various communicative purposes.

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