

Aesthetic Problem of Jakarta: Relation Between Yogyakarta's Theatre Performers and Jakarta's Audience

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Abstract

This paper discusses the differences in aesthetic perspectives that arise due to the differences in language in art performance. The number of local languages that exist to be a unique identity of Indonesia as one nation. Unfortunately, this variety of local languages is merely a local element that is not brought into the global understanding as a greater identity. The language mindset will affect the cultural pattern of each region. When brought into the national language, it will also change the logic of locality thinking. Differences in space use and understanding of local languages become problem when interpreted in a show performance. The typical local script to be introduced to the national space will be compressed to the selection of words and meanings. As a result, often a typical scene in each region fail to be translated in staging. Departing from this issue, many art practitioners make language compromises as effort to translate to national understanding. I use observation methods on some performances performed by local artists of Yogyakarta in Jakarta. The observations then analyzed using a staging comparison in Yogyakarta with Jakarta. In many stages, misinterpretation of language can not be elaborated on the text message in its entirety. Using a pragmatic theory approach, I would like to point out that the use of local language understanding is reduced in national space. Therefore, an aesthetic approach is needed that not only focuses on word translation, it is necessary to care about local understanding in the national space.

Keywords: theatre, aesthetics, language

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Introduction

Indonesia as the largest archipelago country in the world has a variety of cultures numbering in the thousands. Cultural diversity is felt from thousands of local languages are still actively used as daily conversation language. The number of regional languages is visible when traveling every 100 km, people already speak in different local language. Bahasa Indonesia which is also the official language of the country appears as a lingua franca for the owners of local languages. Indonesian language is taught from the most basic level education to the university. Almost all Indonesian people can understand and use Indonesian language fluently. However, the influence of the local language can not simply be replaced by the Indonesian language. Indonesian language which is counted as a very young language was not yet strongly rooted like local language. One reason is that Indonesian language was born politically instead culturally. Indonesian language was born politically as a lingua franca to unite very diverse societies to fight against the Dutch East Indies colonial government. The use of the Indonesian language has been very tempestuous as the impact of independence euphoria and the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia.

Indonesian language continues to be nurtured and made as golden child, especially in the New Order regime. The New Order dictator regime strongly emphasized the aspect of national unity and stability with Indonesian language as its tool. Local cultures are selected and taken to be Indonesian cultures or more precisely local cultures are taken to be Indonesianized. Selected cultures are cultural products that fit the agenda of the New Order government better known as the "peaks of local culture" and then combined to become "Indonesian culture" as a national identity. This policy creates confusion because these "peaks of local culture" leave behind their cultural roots. It is not surprising then that there is a gap between national identity and cultural roots. This relationship is like understanding but not having, seeing but not touching. After the change of the New Order regime, coercion to use this national identity attribute instantly disappeared. Political conditions change, governance reform. If previously the government was centralized, now the regions have their own autonomy. As a result, the regions build according to their own interests.

Theatre in Indonesia is much affected on the political condition. In the New Order regime, the theatre was one of the items overseen by the government. Theatre performance can not be arbitrary and must get permission from the police and military. In order to obtain organizing permission, the theatre group should present what will be staged in before the police and military apparatus. If there is little to offend the ugliness of the government or raise the theme that the government dislikes, the permit will not be granted. Because of this rigorous censorship, it has become a common way to use satire methods in criticizing the government. The collapse of the New Order regime instantly deprives the censors of the theatre. New Order regime that had become a common enemy then disappeared. Theatre groups which are facing this situation are beginning to look for new identities.

Theatre groups, especially those not from Jakarta, seek new identities according to their respective cultural roots. New identity features emerge according to the context of their respective regions. The topics raised have different approaches: cultural identity, religion, space and city, etc (Hatley, 2014: 27). Meanwhile, the spectators in the center of the country that is Jakarta is not growing dynamically. Jakarta, as the center of government, has been too long attached with the "national identity" echoed by the New Order regime. This "national identity" is unfortunately not given with its cultural roots, making it difficult to keep up with the dynamics. When the performers from outside Jakarta have undergone new dynamics, the audience in Jakarta is still stagnant. This is what widened the distance between the presenters from the area and the audience in Jakarta.

Performance

Since modern theatre era, the spectators are no longer considered passive in stage performance. The spectators have been considered "exist" and become inseparable participant. The existence and presence of the spectators contains its ability to energized performers thus the relationship between performers and spectators is formed by the energy circulation from performers to spectators and back again due the live presence of both participant (McAuley, 2002: 246). The process of energy circulation between performers and spectators can not be separated from the nature of performance. Not every event can be considered as performance although it draws attention to watch. Event such as car accident in the street, fire, or even just crowds can draw attention or curiosity to watch because it contains nature of extraordinariness. Nevertheless, events abovementioned are extraordinary still can not be considered as performance even though performance has the same nature but it also has another important nature: intent. Thus, performance deliberates intention to show or perform. Pertunjukan dibentuk dari pertemuan antara kesengajaan untuk mempertontonkan sesuatu dengan hasrat penonton untuk mengalami sesuatu yang tidak biasa.

A theatrical performance shows something extra ordinary can be seen from all its aspects. The performers, costumes, sound, light, movement, dialogue, etc. have been set with a specific purpose. All aspects are arranged to focus attention on an event (theatre performance). This focus is not an ordinary experience. Everyday experiences are partial and alternate. This focusing gives a heightened experience (Simatupang, 2013: 66). However, the relationship between "ordinary" and "extra ordinary" runs paradoxically. "Extra ordinary" comes into existence because of an understanding of something "ordinary". This situation does not take place stagnantly but dynamically. "Extra ordinary" will be "ordinary" if often showed or performed. As well as the "extra ordinary", theatre performance has its time to end and the audience is drawn back to an "ordinary" situation. This situation shows that a theatre performance is a real event but not identical with everyday reality (Simatupang, 2013: 66).

Spectators

In relation to theatrical performances, the spectators in fact consciously try to fulfill their desire to accept something "extra ordinary". By watching a theatre performance, the

process the spectators go through is not just where the performance is. Spectators have prepared themselves ahead of time, buying tickets, arranging the way to go to the venue, etc. At the venues, the spectators do not just get what the viewer displays. The audience also felt another sensation of the events that also happened there: dark atmosphere, other spectators busy taking pictures with mobile phones and uploading to social media, cold room due to air conditioning, etc. This means that the audience is not only watching the performance but also experiencing the event. The process of experiencing an event is captured through the body so an experience is captured by embodied cognition. However, the process of understanding experiences always uses mental processes of remembering, thinking, and imagining. Therefore, the process of experiencing also through the process of interpreting that is influenced by individual factors and culture (Bruner, 1986: 6).

The relationship between performer and spectators occurs at the same place and time. Because the audience is actually doing the activity, it is no longer relevant if the audience is marginalized in a theatre performance. Performers and spectators are simultaneously actively engaged in the same space and time so it can be said that theatre performance is an interaction and through of which that the process of energy circulation revives theatrical performances.

Local and Identity

By the end of the new Order regime, the performing arts of the theatre in Yogyakarta shifted to a more contemporary and focused on the aspect of localization (Hatley, 2014: 27). One of the theatre groups from Yogyakarta that has been working since the New Order regime and still exist until now is Teater Gandrik. Teater Gandrik was born from Yogyakarta art circle and since its emergence it has shown its identity as a theatre group rooted in traditional Javanese theatre. Exist since the era of the New Order regime, Teater Gandrik developed as a cathartic social condition where it came from and very often criticize the government. Just like a theatre group living in the New Order era, the government criticism is packaged in satire or comedy and tends to avoid vulgar criticism. In October 2017, Teater Gandrik again the play they performed the first time, *Pensiunan* (Pensionary), at Galeri Indonesia Kaya in Jakarta. The play tells the story of the life of retired government employees who must be willing to stand in line because of the tortuous bureaucracy and every time they receive a pension, the amount is never in accordance with the receipt because of corrupt practices that lavish. Instead of complaining about this condition, the characters understand it as common condition. This tendency continues on the plays staged by Teater Gandrik after the New Order regime such as *Tangis* and *Pandol*. Plays which are staged by Teater Gandrik is a representation of the Teater Gandrik experience by looking at the situation around them in Yogyakarta. They do not specifically offend the government but highlight the most affected social groups of government policy.

As a theatre group originating from Yogyakarta, Teater Gandrik is influenced by Javanese language which is the daily conversation language in Yogyakarta. In fact, Teater Gandrik makes the Javanese language as its identity. The style of dialogue, diction, theme, terminology, idiom mostly depart from Javanese. This group has its own

comedic style that is absorbed and developed from Javanese language and culture and they call it *guyon pari kena*, comedy style with satirical but give direct punch. This very satire style remains faithful to be used and the identity of Teater Gandrik. The staging style of Teater Gandrik is also much influenced by the Javanese folk theatre that puts the audience as an active participant in the theatre performances. The audience can give a direct reaction in the show and even, not infrequently the audience can interrupt the actor's dialogue and brief improvisation dialogue occurs in response. This event shows the aesthetic nature of theatrical performances when events are built together between the actor and the audience.

Local to National

If the Teater Gandrik of Yogyakarta could be justified as a local representation, Jakarta is a national representation. As a national representation, Jakarta will certainly be a lot of "guest" who perform theatrical performances. Theatre groups such as the Teater Gandrik that are already contractually bound by sponsors have an obligation to perform on a national scale. Unlike Yogyakarta, as a community, Jakarta has no strong cultural roots. Jakarta does not have a local language that becomes the language of everyday communication. Communities in Jakarta are facing phenomena that cut between local events and national events. Because the image of the national representation is so inherent in Jakarta, it is easy to confuse local events as national events. Although only local events but because it happened in Jakarta then considered as a national event. This is already happening in the governor election of Jakarta in 2017. This local event in fact has a national impact and become a national conversation as well. With the dynamics happening in Jakarta, the community in Jakarta has a daily experience that is much different than other regions. The dynamics of city with traffic jams, limited space, conditions close to the central government helped shape the embodied cognition of the Jakarta community. Embodied cognition affects perspective and becomes a reference to judge something as "ordinary" and "extra ordinary".

With its representation as a national, people in Jakarta actually keep a shortage in receiving references to events that occur outside of Jakarta. Teater Gandrik from Yogyakarta, for example, can easily know the events that occurred in Jakarta because generally events that occur in Jakarta will be disseminated nationally. However, very few events that occur in Yogyakarta are disseminated nationally. This is still augmented by the knowledge of the Indonesian language used as the daily conversation language in Jakarta but the Javanese language used as the daily conversation language in Yogyakarta is not widely known in Jakarta. As spectator, the people of Jakarta experience the lack of reference and experience. Of course this condition is not beneficial considering Jakarta always receives many "guests" who perform in Jakarta.

In the play *Pensiunan* (Pensionary) by Teater Gandrik in October 2017 at Galeri Indonesia Kaya in Jakarta, Teater Gandrik tried to accommodate its spectators by using Indonesian language and more common comedy punch line. Still, this effort did not completely work because Teater Gandrik translated from local elements to lingua franca. As a result, some dictions do not feel right because they are not often used by spectators

from Jakarta in daily conversation. Although speaking Indonesian language, but Theatre Gandrik caught distant with the Indonesian language. Nuances presented can not be exactly as if presented in the Javanese language. This situation is also often expressed by the actors from Yogyakarta. Whani Dharmawan, who has appeared as actor in Teater Gandrik, said that he should make a special effort to make the spectator in Jakarta understand what he wants to perform and feel more freely in Yogyakarta because the actor feels confident that what performed can be directly captured by the spectators. From the spectators' side, this distance is widened due to limited reference and embodied cognition.

Conclusion

To be able to experience the aesthetic experience as spectators in theatrical performances, embodied cognition is an important aspect. Embodied cognition is accompanied by mental processes of remembering, thinking, imagining. Experience as aesthetic also through the process of interpretation. The context of Jakarta as space presents the events that become the reference of embodied cognition. Jakarta who received "national identity" was not rich enough to produce embodied cognition and "ordinary" and "extra ordinary" experiences. Therefore, there is always a distance between spectators and theatre performances. The existence of this distance of course inhibits the audience of Jakarta to interpret when theatre performances are witnessed. One consequence is that performers and spectators can not build interaction relationships and make cessation of energy circulation between the performers and the spectators. Therefore, audiences in Jakarta find it difficult to process an event into an experience and feel aesthetically something "extra ordinary". The number of "guests" who perform in Jakarta should be an "exercise" event to add experience. However, for now, the distance between Jakarta audiences and theatrical performances is still too wide to be removed.

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