

# Modality Markers in Visual Mak Yong Traditional Dance Drama

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**Abstract.** This study aims at studying the modality markers represented in the selected images of Mak Yong traditional dance drama. Two images were selected through a documentation technique. The analysis results showed the multimodal perspective of modality markers varied from low to high modality. The color saturation, differentiation, and modulation showed the low modality of colors, monochromic due to the limitation of colours ranging from black and white. In accompanying these three mentioned concepts, the contextualization and background appear medium to high modality. It is proved by the detailed background of the images and the illumination of the complete representation of the play of light and shade, and the maximal deep perspective of Mak Yong and Pak Yong's performance. Since the images are printed monochromic, the representation did not portray the actual colors in reality.

**Keywords:** Mak Yong, Modality, Markers, Visual

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## 1 Introduction

Mak Yong is a Malay dance-drama tradition originated in the Patani region of southern Thailand and the northeastern Malaysian state of Kelantan. Recognized by UNESCO in 2005 as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, Mak Yong encompasses elements of dance, music, acting, singing, and storytelling. Mak Yong brought together players and spectators in the same space, time, and place in its performance. As a folk theatre and ritual performance that has taken root in communities in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, Mak Yong is a folk tradition that enjoyed the patronage of the Kelantan Sultanate until the 1920s, absorbing many refinements of palace arts in the process (Yousof, 2017).

Research by Pudentia (2010) analyzes Mak Yong as one of the Malay performing art traditions that have been revitalized over the last five years. She found that culture can only be restored when a cultural tradition is considered of important its owning community. She told the

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importance of cultural tradition for the identity of that community or to what extent it symbolizes that society can only be established after in-depth study. Revitalization activities must involve the community. She taught it is interesting to show how Mak Yong has represented and expressed Malay dynamics using revitalization efforts.

The musical instruments consist of two string violins (*rebab*), a flute (*serunai*), a lead drum (*gendang pengibu*), accompanying drums (*gendang penganak*), a lead tambourine (*Gombak pengibu*), a gong, a small gong (*canang*), and a *kerecek* or a bamboo instrument (Sinar, 2009). During the play, some characters wear masks, especially men who perform the roles of females, ogres, and other supernatural beings. Mak Yong was first heard of existence in Thailand (then Siam) in Nara Yala, Patani (Narathiwat) in the seventeenth century, and that it had spread to Kelantan (Malaysia) around two hundred years ago. However, in Malaysia, no masks were used in the place of origin (Sheppard 1972: 58, 134). For the first time, Mak Yong was brought to Kelantan as a present from Patani for a marriage between the two Sultanates of Patani and Kelantan (see Yousof 1982).

In Indonesia, Mak Yong has been found in the islands of Riau (Bintan and Batam), North Sumatera (in areas of Serdang) and Western Kalimantan (Sambas). Around one hundred years ago, Mak Yong was brought from Kelantan to the Riau Islands through Tanjung Kurau (present-day Singapore). The Serdang Mak Yong is assumed to have existed since the early 19th century when the Sultan of Kedah Malaysia gave musical instruments, sets, properties, and costumes for a Mak Yong performance complete with the troupe of actors as a gift to the Sultan Serdang. (see Yousof 1982).

This study was conducted qualitatively using the multimodal interpersonal meaning to discuss the modality markers of Mak Yong and Pak Yong visual images, a semiotics combination such as speech, music, movement, space, and action, which work together to build interpersonal meaning. The analysis of Mak Yong dance drama as data source has been studied by many scholars, i.e., Hardwick (2020), Matusky (2015), Dimasari & Arnesih (2017), Khan, MP, et al. (2018). Still, no one analyzes Mak Yong using images in multimodal theory. Image in multimodal terminology can refer to many different things: photographs, drawings, impressionist paintings, film, and so on (Sinar, 2018).

Furthermore, this study is due to something that sustains features of images in terms of modality markers. Mak Yong and Pak Yong's appearance might be exposed through color saturation illumination, and to create a slightly idealized representation of this individual. Mak Yong's performance constructs the position of the 'viewer' through 'offer' or 'demand,' "close-up or distant," and "depth and background" of represented characters of Mak Yong and Pak Yong.

In this study, the term multimodality represents images that are material entities, such as photographs and film. The representation of images, ideas, and attitudes communicates how these images can be constructed (i.e., how the ‘viewer’ is encouraged to relate to the picture), and, overall, what the image is being used to do, such as to inform, explain, persuade, warn, entertain, and so on. Several analytical ‘tools’ have been developed to carry out such analysis. For example, Kress and Leeuwen (1996) developed the idea of visual modality to evaluate the truth claims of an image. A multimodal approach also asks how an image relates to other modes, such as writing alongside a photograph in a newspaper (Knox, 2007) or the sound in a film or animation (Leeuwen, 2005; Burn, 2003), as well as the actions and interactions (e.g., movement, gaze, speech, gesture) entailed in the process of producing it.

These modality markers provide clues to how the ‘viewer’ evaluates her and him in the images. The problem of this study is formulated as “How is the realization of Modality in the Mak Yong traditional dance?” Recently, Mak Yong is rarely performed in Medan. Therefore, the data source, i.e. pictures and video of this study, are accessible from the Tengku Luckman Sinar library. In the multimodal analysis, pictures are termed images in this study. In order to carry out that analysis, images are constructed through the modality markers under the interpersonal function. The reason for choosing this concept, it can show the social position of the ‘viewer’ through ‘offer’ or ‘demand,’ which is created through the represented participant of Mak Yong and Pak Yong. These features provide clues how the ‘viewer’ is being encouraged to evaluate the person depicted in the image, and hence what the image is being used. Therefore, the problem of the study is formulated as “What are the modality markers of *Mak Yong* and *Pak Yong* images?”

## **2 Literature Review**

### *2.1. Multimodal Analysis*

Halliday (1978:4) has ever told that there are many other modes of meaning, in any culture which are outside the realm of language. His statement gives the implication that the understanding of meaning not only requires the analysis of language in the text but also the study of other semiotic resources such as images, gestures, sounds, etc. operating independently as well as interdependently on different levels in multimodal text.

It is true that in all aspects of life, semiotic resources are inherent and people can live multimodally in any culture in which different semiotic systems operate. Kress & Leeuwen (in Bell and Garrett, 2001:187) put forwards “Language is always realized through and accompanied by other semiotic modes. When people speak, they articulate the messages not only using words but also through a combination of speech sound, rhythm, intonation and accompanied by facial expression, gestures and posture. Leeuwen (in Liu, 2013) says the

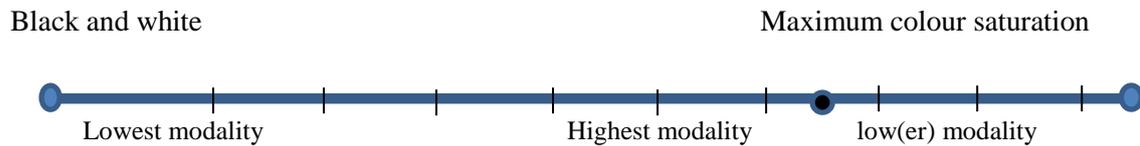
combination of different semiotic modes – for example, language and music – in a communicative artifact or event.

In this article, the research limits the identification of visual elements of Mak Yong and Pak Yong dancers in terms of modality markers under the interpersonal functions system. This term has been used by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996,2006) adapting from Halliday's three main components of metafunction of Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual. The ideational metafunction is called as Representation which consists of narrative structure and conceptual structure (Sinar, 2018). In abstract images such as diagrams, narrative processes are realized by abstract graphic elements for instance, lines with an explicit indicator of directionality, usually an arrowhead. The interpersonal function is called Interaction by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Interaction can be divided by social distance and modality. There is modality as markers in visual design which are the range of signs and range of means of expressing meanings of truth and falsehood, fact and fiction, certainty and doubt, credibility and unreliability Kress and van Leeuwen: 1996, 2006). The textual function is called as Composition which has three principles of information value, salience, and framing of applying to single pictures, or composite visuals, that combine text and image and, other graphic elements, computer screen.

## *2.2. Modality Markers*

There has been much discussion on modality markers, however, there are two that seem to be a similar view which is a view of the traditional Malay wedding ceremony. Rahmah (2013), and Zein (2020) draw that in the traditional Malay wedding ceremony, no eye contact is made with viewers. Likewise, in a dance drama of Mak Yong, the represented participants do not create a relationship with the viewer. Moreover, in terms of the foreground-background continuum, detailed background and close shots of the foreground implying that the percussion players are not at the same level with the dancers. In terms of colour saturation, differentiation, and modulation, Malay weddings and Mak Yong represented participants also mark low modality.

As this study has chosen the underlying modality theory to analyse Mak Yong traditional dance images, the modality markers for the tool of analysing the visual images used concepts by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) are colour saturation, differentiation, and modulation related to the markers of contextualization, representation, depth and illumination as the grammar of visual images. In terms of colour saturation, a colour scale runs from full colour to the absence of colour; for example to black and white. Likewise, colour differentiation scales from a maximally diversified range of colours to monochrome, and colour modulation runs from fully modulated colour, with, for example, the use of many different shades of red, to plain, unmodulated colour.



**Figure 1:** Colour saturation (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006)

Contextualization is a scale running from the absence of background to the most fully articulated and detailed background, representation, a scale running from maximum abstraction to maximum representation of pictorial detail, and Depth, a scale running from the absence of depth to maximally deep perspective, and Illumination, a scale running from the fullest representation of the play of light and shade to its absence.

### 3 Research Methods

This article was conducted using a qualitative approach to determine how to seek, collect, process, and analyze research data. The researcher is very dependent on information from the object/participant on a broad scope, general questions, partial data collection that consists mostly of words/texts from participants, explains and analyzes words, and conducts research subjectively (Creswell, 2008).

#### 3.1 Data and Source Data

Data refers to the rough materials collected from the world to be studied including interview transcripts, observation field notes, diaries, photographs, official documents, and newspaper articles (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). In this study, the collected data concerning the visual representations of cultural text data sources are selected images of Mak Yong traditional dance that were taken from the documentation of Taman Bacaan Masyarakat Tengku Luckman Sinar. The visual data which were taken from photographs of Mak Yong Traditional dance taken into images which showed the activities of modality markers.

#### 3.2 Research Sites

The location of data sources site is at the Taman Bacaan Masyarakat Tengku Luckman Sinar which has its address at Jalan Abdullah Lubis, 42/47 Medan City, 20155, North Sumatra. The reason for choosing the location is due to services that can be used by the community and library users. Data collection according to Creswell (Creswell J. W., 2009) is an attempt to limit research, collecting information through document types.

#### 3.3 Method of Collecting Data

There are five data collecting techniques. These are observation, interview, questionnaire, documentation, and triangulation. This study applies the collection of data through a literature study and the document analysis method. Document analysis in the form of the required information can be obtained through books, journals, magazines, newspapers, research reports, the internet, and other sources related to this research. The overall data analysis process involves

trying to interpret data in the form of text or text images so that researchers need to prepare the data for proper analysis different, deepen understanding, present data, and make broad interpretations of the meaning of that data.

The method of data collection is the study of documents. Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of human processes. (Miles et al, 2014:1). Collecting some selected images to be analyzed is a kind of method of documentation type in which it should be related to research problems and theory.

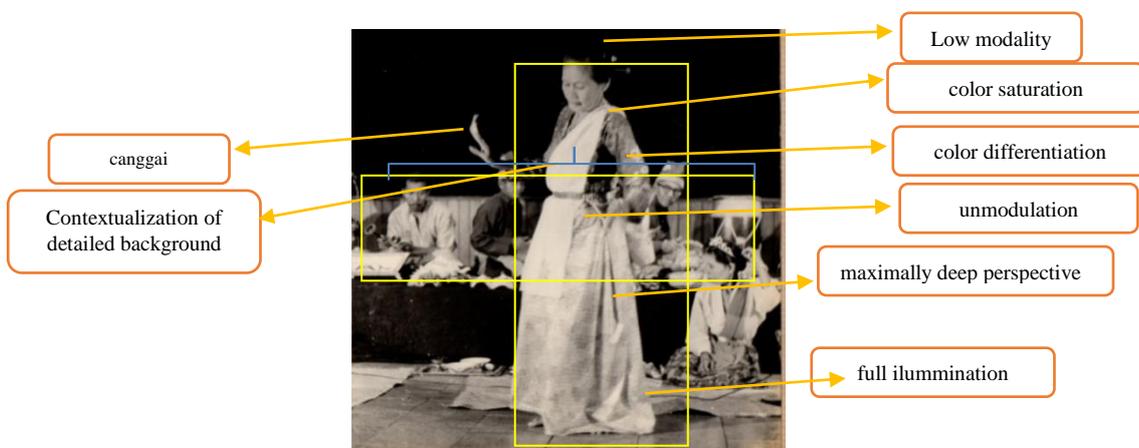
### 3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The process of data analysis in qualitative research (Creswell, 2008) is divided into several steps, the first step, namely processing and preparing data for analyzed. Then the second step is to read the entire data. The images were read and examined carefully to identify the components of analysis. The process of data analysis technique of the visual elements then abstracting and coding the data. The third step includes implementing the coding process for describing the setting, informants, categories, and themes to be analyzed. The fourth step then shows a description and the themes were restated in the narrative/ qualitative report. The visual is knitting in a form of an image to make the data look more organized and easier to observe so it helps conclusion drawing. And the fifth step is the verification of data to interpret the data.

## 4 Analysis and Findings

### 4.1 Analysis of Modality markers in Princess Mak Yong

In the picture below, it illustrates that Princess Makyong sings while dancing with a slow and graceful movement. She does not demand the viewers, they are called offer images, as they do not look at the viewer emphasizing the naturalness of the event.



**Figure 1.** Multimodal analysis of Princess Mak Yong

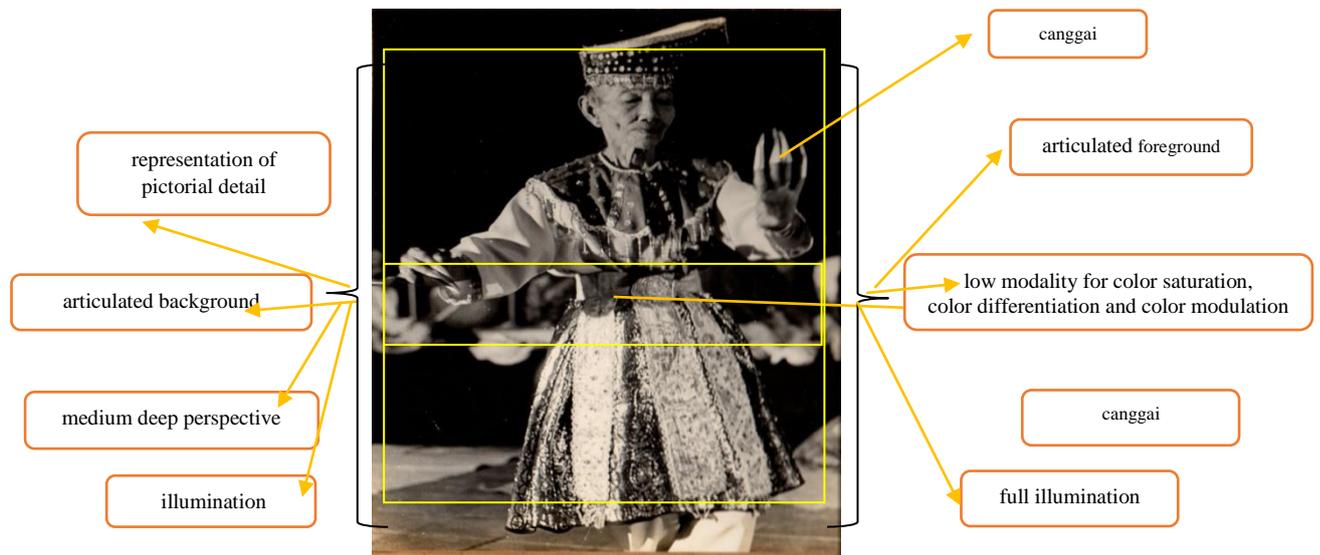
The visual of Princess Makyong above played the story of Princess Ratna. The *canggih* was used by Princess Ratna and her ladies-in-waiting. Putting on the *canggih* on their fingers indicates that their fingers with long tap and long nails show those who are not used to working rough. As the main dancer, she wears a layering outfit added with a gold-plated belt. However, the viewers may not be able to figure out the material as well as the precise patterns of the fabric of the costume the main dancer is wearing.

The modality markers show the quality of visualization that has been very monochromatic as it is considered a low modality. It can be proved from the color saturation and color differentiation show the lack of range of colors only black and white. In terms of color modulation, the shades are unmodulated also ranging from black to white, accompanying the contextualization of medium to high modality. Visually, it is almost clear articulated with the detailed background but slightly blurred due to the effect of repairing the picture's quality. The viewers may not be able to confirm where the performance took place, whether outdoor or indoor.

The representation shows medium modality since the viewers can still see the most important accessories the main dancer is wearing the long nails *Canggih* that were made of fake gold to decorate her fingers. The depth is seen as a maximally deep perspective. It is categorized as a central perspective with the illumination of high modality and is the full representation of the play of light and shade. The viewers are able to see and observe the contents within the image in general. The brightness has been categorized as low modality, since it is minimum number degrees, that are black and white and shades originating from them.

#### 4.2 *Analysis of Modality markers in Pak Yong*

On the stage, there is Pak Yong wearing the *canggih*, while the orchestra plays a song by the traditional instrumental band players accompanying the dancing. The stage is *seemingly* held indoor. Pak Yong image has a central perspective and, hence, a built-in point of view. There have been different levels among Pak Yong and the team supporting the performance of the main dancer.



**Figure 2.** Multimodal analysis of Pak Yong

The modality markers show low modality for color saturation, color differentiation, and color modulation as the image is seen with minimum diversity of colors and the shades are ranging from black and white. In terms of contextualization is a medium modality, almost clear articulated background and it is to confirm that the performance took place on the stage indoors.

The viewers can still see the most important accessories the Pak Yong is wearing, the hat as well as the costume outfit with some glimmering details attached to it, contrasting to the other participants in the picture. In terms of depth, it is a medium modality, and the illumination represents the light and shade towards Pak Yong. The viewers are able to see and observe the contents within the pictures in general. The brightness is a minimum number of only two degrees, black and white and shades originating from them.

## 5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the images can be seen as the naturalness of the performance of Mak Yong and Pak Yong due to they do not look at the viewers, showing that this shot was a candid. The shot shows the full figure of the dancers dancing as the central attention is drawn to them. The medium-long shot emphasizes the foreground of the main dancers dancing gracefully and putting the Canggai on their fingers while dancing, accompanied by the traditional percussion band players that were sitting in the background. Princess Mak Yong and Pak Yong are the main dancers.

The modality markers show low modality in terms of color saturation, color differentiation color modulation and brightness as the shades are ranging from black to white. The contextualization shows medium due to the slightly blurred effect of the picture's quality. The representation is the maximum representation of pictorial detail since the viewers can see Pak Yong and Mak Yong's costumes with a gold-plated belt and sarong fabric. It is a maximally deep perspective and full representation of the play of light and shade. The viewers are able to see and observe the contents within the pictures in general.

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