

Research Article

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Multimodal rhetorical strategies of Asep Sunandar Sunarya's *Wayang Golek* performances: multimodality-based genre analysis

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Abstract: This study reveals how Asep Sunandar Sunarya, a well-known Sundanese Dalang (the puppeteer), told stories in his Wayang Golek shows. It explores how he told stories to audiences by examining the storytelling strategies through dialogue sequences, combined with two other elements used during the shows: Wayang Golek's movements and different voice modulation. In the analysis, it utilizes Labov's narrative elements theory (1972) to classify the sequence moves of Asep's storytelling strategies, van Leeuwen's social semiotics theory (2005) to analyze Asep's Wayang Golek's movements, and Python's coding process to analyze Asep's voice color modulation for each character of Wayang Golek he was playing in his 3 (three) performances videos. As a result, this study shows that Asep, when telling stories, used two rhetorical strategy types, obligatory and additional, in 6 (six) narrative moves. All the rhetorical strategies used are multimodally cohered with Wayang Golek's movements and his different voice color modulation to tell stories to the spectators. This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of the structural and rhetorical characteristics of Wayang Golek performances, particularly those exemplified by Asep Sunandar Sunarya. Such findings can serve as a reference for future studies or for practitioners who seek to analyze, preserve, or learn from Asep's performance style.

Keywords: Asep Sunandar Sunarya; multimodal rhetorical strategies; Python coding process; voice color modulation; Wayang Golek's movement

1 Introduction

Wayang Golek performance is Indonesia's Sundanese cultural storytelling art heritage (Maulana et al. 2024). This traditional art show has been passed down from generation to generation since the early 16th century in West Java. Based on historical records, the show was first popular in the Cirebon region and spread widely throughout West Java areas afterward (Agisfi and Rabbil 2023; Hadijah 2012; Limelta and Paramita 2020; Weintraub 2004). It now symbolizes a strong bond with the cultural identity of the Sundanese people (Sabilla and Sari 2021). *Wayang golek* is a wood puppet (Hadijah 2012; Sauky and Bukhori 2021) adapted from the Javanese shadow puppet (*Wayang Kulit*) tradition. In the past, Islamic preachers (saints) and their disciples used the performance as a medium to convey Islamic teachings. The preaching started when the people were happy with the performance. In that state, the saints began to preach Islamic teachings slowly. By incorporating religious themes and life moral

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lessons into the show, they communicated Islamic values in a way that was accessible and engaging to societies (Qonita et al. 2022). This strategy facilitated the spread of Islam within the cultural context of the Indonesian people, especially the Sundanese.

The show becomes glamorous as time flies, adding *gamelan* music and spectacular lighting (Maulana et al. 2024). The traditional music and lighting blend with storytelling led by a *Dalang* (puppeteer) to attract audiences from all walks of life (Weintraub 2004). In the show, *Dalang* narrates epic stories and moves the puppet harmoniously. In addition, the *gamelan* music's rich sound can create a great auditory experience, complementing the storytelling. However, the role of the puppeteer in the show is the most crucial.

One of the famous Wayang Golek puppeteers was the late Asep Sunandar Sunarya. Renowned for his extraordinary skills and innovative techniques, he brought the show to new heights of popularity in Indonesia and internationally (Masyuning 2021; Nalan 2015, 2016). His performances and charismatic presence could attract audiences of all ages (Irfansyah and Sunarto 2013; Weintraub 2004). Besides, Asep contributed to the show's development, ensuring its continued cultural relevance in a rapidly life-changing way. His legacy lives on through his family and students in the hermitage of *Giri Harja 3*, who continue to perform and promote his performance style.

Due to his popularity and recognition, in an academic context, what Asep did with his Wayang Golek has been studied comprehensively across various disciplines using several approaches, such as phenomenology, literature, history, and linguistics, to explore multiple aspects, including communication, art, and cultural meaning. Several phenomenological studies found that Asep's way of communicating was *Mandala Wiwaha*, or that he was very competent at communicating with his audience (Nalan 2012, 2016). Then, using a literary approach, several researchers analyzed the themes and symbolism in his performances and connected them to traditional literature, mythology, and religious beliefs (Rakhman 2013; Suci 2023). Furthermore, historical research has investigated the sociocultural context in which Asep lived and worked, and traced the evolution of Wayang Golek as a performing art, thereby explaining its enduring popularity in society (Salma and Tarpin 2019). In addition, the politeness in his language during his show has also been studied using pragmatics (San Rizqiya 2017).

Of the many studies on Asep's Wayang Golek performances, no research has discussed his discourse structure during the shows or how Asep organised what he typically said first, then what followed, and so on, to effectively deliver messages to his audience. The approach that examines discourse structure is genre analysis (GA) (Bhatia 2013; Swales 2004). From the GA lens, discourse structure is divided into two main structures: generic and rhetorical (Paltridge 2022). The generic structure focuses on identifying the core components of the performance and how these components are arranged to form a coherent sequence. For example, Asep's Wayang Golek performances likely consist of traditional narrative elements in a written short story: abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Labov 1972). On the other hand, the rhetorical structure is a series of strategies in a particular order to realize the moves in the generic structure, also called 'steps' (Bhatia 2013; Henry and Roseberry 2001).

Nowadays, many discourse structure studies have focused on academic written texts, such as theses (Sükan and Mohammadzadeh 2022; Zhang and Pramoolsook 2019), dissertations (Abdolmalaki et al. 2019; Sükan and Mohammadzadeh 2022), and journal articles (Suherdi et al. 2020). In addition, there is also a discussion of GA in media discourse, like what Hajimia et al. (2022) conducted. Moreover, some spoken oral academic discourse studies were found, as demonstrated in the research of Kuswoyo et al. (2020) and Rido et al. (2023). These studies have examined how spoken classroom discourses are structured to convey information effectively and maintain coherence. Despite this progress, the application of discourse structure analysis remains limited outside formal educational and media contexts. Accordingly, there is a gap in the research regarding analyzing discourse in traditional and performative art forms, such as Wayang Golek performances. Exploring this area could offer new insights into how discourse functions in a more informal yet highly and culturally structured communication genre.

Since the Wayang Golek show is a multimodal performance that uses several modes of communication to tell a story, this study applies multimodality-based GA to Asep's Wayang Golek performances, which aims to reveal how Asep orderly conveyed the stories while moving the puppets. The multimodality approach functions to describe the strategies of multimodal communication (Asidiky 2022; Bateman 2008; Kress 2010; Paltridge 2022; van

Leeuwen 2005), especially how Asep's storytelling strategy, puppet movements, and changes in his voice cohered with each other in his *Wayang Golek* performances before the spectators.

By examining the dialogue and the multimodal elements during the performance, especially the puppets' movements and voice modulation, this study tries to understand discourse in art performances beyond mass media and academic texts. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the structural and rhetorical characteristics of *Wayang Golek* performances, particularly those exemplified by Asep Sunandar Sunarya. Such findings can serve as a reference for future studies or for practitioners who seek to analyze, preserve, or learn from Asep's performance style. A clearer understanding of these features may also support efforts to enhance the appreciation and sustainability of *Wayang Golek* as an important form of Sundanese cultural expression. For the reasons above, this study aims to answer the following questions.

- (1) What rhetorical strategies did Asep Sunandar Sunarya use in telling stories in his *Wayang Golek* performances?
- (2) How did Asep move *Wayang Golek* (the puppets) when telling stories?
- (3) How did Asep modulate his voice when telling the stories?

2 Methods

This study employs a multimodality-based GA approach to investigate how Asep Sunandar Sunarya constructs rhetorical strategies in his *Wayang Golek* performances. The research integrates three semiotic dimensions – verbal (narrative and discourse), visual (gesture and movement), and auditory (voice modulation) – to explain how meanings are communicated through multiple modes in a traditional performance setting.

Integrating these frameworks enables a comprehensive exploration of how linguistic, visual, and auditory resources work together rhetorically to convey meaning in Asep Sunandar Sunarya's *Wayang Golek* performances. The study does not aim to generalize the entire *Wayang Golek* genre. Instead, it focuses specifically on the rhetorical and multimodal characteristics of Asep Sunandar Sunarya's performances as a representative example of his artistic and communicative style within the Sundanese *Wayang Golek* tradition.

2.1 Data and selection criteria

The data for this study consist of three full-length recordings of Asep Sunandar Sunarya's *Wayang Golek* performances: *Sukma Dewa Kusuma*, *Sukma Sajati*, and *Panca Suta*. Each performance lasted 3–4 h, was performed in the Sundanese language, and was delivered live to audiences. The recordings are obtained from YouTube, as these are among the most widely circulated and publicly accessible archives of Asep Sunandar's performances.

These three performances are selected purposively based on several key considerations.

First, they are among the most-viewed videos of Asep Sunandar's work, indicating high public engagement and cultural relevance. The number of views indicates that these performances connect strongly with audiences and reflect the master's mature rhetorical and artistic style.

Second, due to Asep Sunandar Sunarya's passing in 2014, complete and high-quality recordings of his full performances are minimal. Many existing videos are partial, fragmented, or poorly documented. As a result, only a small number of recordings meet the completeness and clarity criteria necessary for systematic multimodal analysis. Therefore, these three performances were chosen as the most representative corpus available.

2.2 Data analysis design

This study combines three complementary analytical frameworks: Labov's (1972) narrative structure, van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotics, and acoustic analysis using Python's Librosa library. William Labov's

classification of narrative elements (1972) is applied to identify the rhetorical structure of Asep's Wayang Golek performances. The application of Labov's framework is particularly significant because Wayang Golek represents a complex oral narrative form in which the dalang performs multiple communicative functions – as narrator, character voice, and commentator. Understanding the internal narrative structure is therefore crucial for examining how rhetorical meaning is organized and sequenced across the performance. In Labovian terms, the Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda function not merely as narrative stages but as rhetorical phases that guide audience attention, shape expressive variation, and structure interpretive engagement. Identifying these structural phases enables the researcher to locate key points of rhetorical emphasis – moments where linguistic elaboration, gesture, and vocal modulation intersect to influence audience perception and response. This structural mapping provides an essential foundation for integrating verbal, visual, and auditory analyses, illustrating how narrative progression interacts with multimodal resources to construct a coherent communicative act within the performative conventions of Wayang Golek.

Building on the structural mapping of rhetorical stages in the verbal mode, van Leeuwen's (2005) social semiotic theory is also used to explain Asep Sunandar Sunarya's Wayang Golek movements. This framework is particularly relevant because it conceptualizes visual and bodily expression as meaning-making systems governed by social, cultural, and communicative conventions rather than as merely aesthetic or physical acts. In the context of Wayang Golek, each movement performed by the dalang and the puppets carries semiotic weight – it indexes social relations, conveys character identity, and structures interaction between performer and audience. Van Leeuwen's model thus enables the analysis to interpret movement as a communicative resource that operates in coordination with verbal narration and vocal modulation, revealing how bodily actions realize and reinforce rhetorical intentions within the multimodal fabric of the performance.

Following the analysis of bodily expression, the auditory analysis examines how Asep Sunandar Sunarya employed voice as a semiotic and rhetorical resource. Rather than treating these measurements as technical outputs, the analysis interpreted them in relation to communicative function and genre convention. For example, elevated pitch levels and broader harmonic ranges are observed in segments where expressive intensity and audience engagement are heightened, while steady, lower frequencies typically accompany narrative transitions or reflective commentary. By quantifying these auditory patterns, the study demonstrates how Asep's vocal expression complements the structural and visual dimensions of the performance, forming a cohesive multimodal ensemble in which voice serves as both a narrative and rhetorical instrument.

In this analysis, Python coding is used to describe how Asep modulated his voice for each Wayang Golek character in his performances. According to Tay (2024), Python is the most adaptable programming language for the data science industry and has a variety of uses, including analyzing linguistic data. The process examined Asep's vocal frequencies when performing each Wayang Golek character. The frequencies analyzed included Fundamental, Harmonic, High and Low Frequencies, and Formants (F1, F2, F3, and F4).

To obtain the Fundamental Frequency values, video files first went through data processing using the OpenVino plugin in Audacity until clean audio files are created for each character. After this, the audio files are labeled and loaded using Python programming. The Librosa library loads the audio file with `'librosa.load()'` for the signal (*y*) and sampling rate (*sr*). Next, the fundamental frequency is calculated using `'librosa.core.piptrack()'`, which yielded the frequency and magnitude of the sound. The high frequency per frame is collected, averaged, and printed to the console if a frequency is detected. If not, it returned None. The Fundamental Frequency shows that characters with a high fundamental frequency have a higher-pitched sound, giving it a light or sharp quality. Conversely, characters with a low fundamental frequency have a deeper, more resonant sound (Kammoun et al. 2006).

After obtaining the Fundamental Frequency values, the Harmonic Frequency values are derived by creating a Python function, as this frequency is a multiple of the Fundamental Frequency. The first harmonic is F_0 , the second is $2 \times F_0$, and so on. Therefore, Harmonic Frequency represents multiples of the Fundamental Frequency, contributing to the sound's colour or timbre. Characters with higher harmonic values tend to have richer or more resonant voices (Zheng et al. 2024).

To obtain High-Frequency values, the audio file is transformed into the frequency domain using the Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) with the help of the Numpy Library (Marin-Hurtado and Anderson 2011). The magnitude

spectrum of the audio file is taken for the intensity of each frequency; high frequency (4,000–8,000 Hz) is isolated using a ‘*treble_mask*’ and then averaged for its intensity. The same process is used to obtain Low-Frequency values but for low frequencies (bass < 300 Hz) with a ‘*bass_mask*’. High frequencies produce sharper sounds, while low frequencies produce a deeper sound.

The method used to calculate *Formant* values from the audio file is FFT and Linear Predictive Coding (LPC). In this case, FFT is used to obtain F1 and F2 values from the positive frequency spectrum of the audio signal within the range (300–1,000 Hz) for F1 and (850–2,500 Hz) for F2. Meanwhile, LPC begins by removing silent sections using ‘*librosa.effects.trim()*’, normalizing the signal, and checking for NaN or inf values. LPC then calculates coefficients and formant frequencies, sorted from F1 to F4 (Přibíl and Přibílová 2012; Reşat et al. 2014).

2.3 Validation and trustworthiness

To ensure interpretive validity, all data and findings are further confirmed through informal consultation with Yoga Sunandar Sunarya, Asep's son and an active Wayang Golek puppeteer, who verifies the authenticity and cultural accuracy of the selected performances. During the validation process, Yoga also confirms that the data, narrative, visual, and vocal patterns identified in the analysis accurately reflect Asep's performance model. According to him, other Wayang Golek performances by Asep followed a similar structure, delivery style, and rhetorical approach. This expert validation enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of the data and data analysis, ensuring that interpretations remain consistent with both the cultural context and Asep Sunandar Sunarya's authentic artistic style within the Sundanese Wayang Golek tradition.

3 Findings and discussion

3.1 The rhetorical strategies of Asep's Wayang Golek performances

After analyzing the data, it was found that Asep used 2 (two) types of rhetorical strategies in telling stories in his performances: *obligatory* and *additional*. However, additional rhetorical strategies can appear in every move in the generic structure or the common order when telling stories. In addition, there are 6 (six) moves of the generic structure identified in Asep's Wayang Golek shows: *orientation*, *complication*, *puppet's monologue*, *evaluation*, *resolution*, and *coda*. The number of moves is similar to William Labov's storytelling moves (1972). However, there is a difference in the generic structure between the general storytelling and the Wayang Golek shows. The difference is in the *puppet monologue* move. In general storytelling, according to Labov (1972), the storytellers may use 6 (six) moves when storytelling: *abstract*, *orientation*, *complication*, *evaluation*, *resolution*, and *coda*.

All the rhetorical strategies Asep used are multimodal since he combined them with Wayang Golek movements and his different voice color modulation to deliver meanings and messages to the spectators. Moreover, these multimodal rhetorical strategies make the performances visually enjoyable for the spectators. Through these strategies, Asep also effectively maintained audience interest and communicated meanings and messages embedded in the narrative. The following are the findings.

Unlike Labov (1972), Asep started the storytelling with the story's *orientation* move, not the *abstract*. The abstract was conveyed by a master of ceremonies (MC) before the shows began. Asep laid the plot's foundation in this orientation move using obligatory rhetorical strategies. His obligatory rhetorical strategies were *setting establishment*, *character presentation*, and *background establishment*. These rhetorical strategies provide the audience with the necessary information to understand the following story through *antawacana* or puppets' dialogue. Two rhetorical strategies, *setting establishment* and *character presentation*, were through *kakawen* he sang. The *kakawen* describes the setting and the story's background for the upcoming narrative (Ramadhan et al. 2015). In *Kakawen*, he employed Kawi Sundanese, a classical language rooted in Javanese Sanskrit (Weintraub 2004). Through this language, Asep tried to connect the audience with cultural values and invoke epic tales. The following excerpt (1) is his *kakawen* at the beginning of his performance with a story Sukma Sajati.

- (1) *'Gentur kang ti nutur gentra kang ci narita, nga wiossakeun kawentenan pangreureuhanana Arjuna ti hiji tempat, anu kacandak ka puseur dayeuh madukara kabanasapon ku nagara Amarta, aya hiji wangunan anu diluyukeun sareng adat, jeung kabiasaan di ieu tempat, di salebakeunnana balong tur pare keur hejo ngemplok dina galeng, tumpang sari, kacang panjang, terong, lenca jeung sajabana, sing sararipit na daun kalapa nu katebak angin, hiji tempat anu nyingkur sisi gunung, hejo lemok dangdaunan rajeg na tutuwuhan cur cor cai nu harerang, marga satwa disarada kembang kembang warna warni dipapaes malar pantes, payus, pami disebat reumbeuy ku teureuyeun loba ku alaeun, watek wantos nagara amarta nagara subur makmur gemah ripah loh jinawi aman santosa kerta jeung raharja, sepi paling towong rampog nu digawe simpe hate kaum buruh hanteu ripuh karyawan sami sarenang, dipalih tonggoh na kadu picung kupa, nangka, nyaeta pangreureuhannana adipati arjuna anu kaleresan, ngahaturanan linggih Semar Badranaya, Astrajingga, sareng Dawala, tungkul hamari teludat nyembah narimang sabda ajrih ningali pamor sang Adipati, watek wantos Arjuna dudu wong samanea, manusa trusing madu trah ing kusuma titising andana wirih trah ing dewa kamanusan, hiji satria pinilih tanding, para ratu mikayungyun, para menak mika serab kolot ngesto budak era deungeun deungeun mikadeudeuh. Pangaruh tina elmu panemu jampe pamake nyaeta salah sawios siswa resi kombayana ti jajar soka lima. Tutas tina katimbulan kagagahan kasaktian lan kamandragunaan, oge tutas tina didikan rohani kalayan jasmani. Rohani kalayan jasmani. Iyas saur nira, anu anak lanjang si lungi, iyas si nangihi, sabda ningrat, yaaa sabda ningrat.'*

(source: *Kakawen* spoken by Asep Sunandar Sunarya in Sukma Sajati story)

The kakawen in excerpt (1) describes the peaceful state of Arjuna's rest in the countryside in Amarta, a kingdom whose natural beauty is in its surroundings. Besides, Amarta is portrayed as a prosperous and fertile kingdom where its people live in peace, abundance, and security. The description emphasizes the harmony and contentment of its citizens, including labourers and employees who work with calm hearts and enjoy their lives. Also, in the above kakawen, Arjuna is described as a warrior blessed with divine favour, possessing incredible strength, valour, and wisdom. Arjuna's charisma and moral authority make him beloved by rulers, respected by elders, and admired by all, from children to outsiders. The kakawen also chanted Semar, Astrajingga (Cepot), and Dawala, whom Arjuna respectfully welcomed in his rest. Those chanted in the kakawen would commonly become the story's main characters. Simply, the kakawen indicates the story's setting of place and its main characters.

After telling the setting and the main characters in the kakawen, Asep utilized another strategy in the orientation: *background establishment*. He used this strategy in the dialogue with every character's gestures and different voice modulation. The following excerpt (2) is the dialogue and a scene from the story Sukma Sajati.

- (2) Arjuna : *Kakang Badranaya, kahareup diukna kang, oge Astrajingga Dawala.*
 Semar : *Aduh aya anakmu, ambuing, nampi rebu nuhun laksa keutik abdi ngahan kana naon rupikal bungbage, kalayan atuh unyuk sumanga ngahaturkeun sembah sungkem kahuunyun panjenengan nun.*
 Arjuna : *Ditarima kang.*
 Semar : *Kalihna ti eta hapunten ti sim abdi, tina sagala rupi hal kalepatan ageung sumawonten alit.*
 Semar : *Kalayan tan sah ti ajeung ajeung aya pikersaeun naon kawulan pangersa?*
 Arjuna : *Keheula antos kang.*
 Semar : *Ooo. mangga mangga mangga.*
 Cepot : *Ti abdi ge ngahaturkeun sembah baktos, nun.*
 Arjuna : *Nuhun, pot.*
 Dawala : *Ti abdi ge teu kantun kulan, Jaka Tingkir!*
 Arjuna : *Ditarima Dawala.*

In the excerpt (2) above, Arjuna respectfully asked Semar and his sons to sit, addressing them properly and politely. Semar then responded with a long, polite, somewhat exaggerated expression of gratitude and humility. Arjuna acknowledged Semar's greeting and politely responded to it. Semar then asked for forgiveness for any mistakes he might have made, continuing his humble tone. Semar also wondered if there was anything Arjuna



Figure 1: The picture of Arjuna (left), Semar, Cepot, and Dawala in Asep's Wayang Golek performance entitled Sukma Sajati at the orientation move in Sukma Sajati story.

needed or commanded of him. Arjuna asked Semar to wait a moment. Semar graciously agreed and permitted Arjuna to proceed. Cepot then joined the conversation, offering thanks as well (Figure 1).

Besides the three obligatory rhetorical strategies, Asep randomly used some *rhetorical strategies* in the orientation move. They were *Islamic teaching commentary*, *humor commentary*, *social commentary*, *cultural commentary*, *moral commentary*, and *political commentary*. These additional strategies were also used in other moves of the generic structure. The following excerpt (3) is the dialogue indicating *Islamic teaching commentary* by Dawala and Cepot in the orientation phase in the story Sukma Sajati.

- (3) Dawala : *Hmm kantenan akang, dina waktos ayeuna urang salaku manusa teh da moal lila hirup di dunya teh, moal langgeng. Tangtuna oge urang teh bakal mayunan hiji alam anu langgeung, margi aya anu leuwih alus tibatan kahirupan dunya nyaeta akhirat tea. Walal aakhirotu khoirullaka minal ula*
- Dawala : *cing aka apal dina surat naon?*
- Cepot : *dina surah waduhe*
- Dawala : *waduha, waduha wallaili ida saja*
- Cepot : *Wadduhe wallaili ida saje*
- Dawala : *naha beda beda teuing?*
- Cepot : *beda, tapi harti mah sarua, eta teh bisi saling teu apal aya dina kitab Alfiah bab Imalah*

In excerpt (3) above, Dawala talked about life's transient nature. He reminded Cepot that human life was short and that people would all eventually face the eternal afterlife, which was better than worldly life. He quoted a phrase from the Quran, which translates to: "And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life]" (Arabic: *وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَى*), a verse from Surah Ad-Duha, verse 4. Dawala then asked if Cepot knew this quote could be found in the Surah (chapter of the Quran). Cepot, likely making a joke, replied, 'In the Surah Waduhe', playing with the sound of *Ad-Duha*, the correct name of the Surah, but Cepot mispronounced it as 'waduhe'. Dawala asks why Cepot's version sounded so different from the actual verse, to which Cepot replied that although the wording may differ, the meaning is the same. He then referenced *Alfiah*, a classic text in Arabic grammar, and mentioned the *Imalah* chapter, a topic in Arabic phonetics about how certain vowels are pronounced.

Meanwhile, the *humor commentary* found in the orientation was as in the following excerpt (4). In excerpt (4), Dawala used a Sundanese proverb to comment humorously on Cepot, who wasted time sleeping or drooling nonsense in the Islamic study forum. The dialogue in this excerpt was taken from a story Sukma Dewa Kusuma.

- (4) Cepot : *Silaing mah bisa ngadalil, dewek mah da henteu*
 Dawala : *Pan diajar. Ieu mah kumaha aya pangaosan teh ngadon nundutan we ngacai teu nyaho aya sisindiran na na ta teh.*
 Dawala : *Sisindirannana?*
 Dawala : *Teu sangka kukupu muntir sing horeng lalay kapipir, ai sугan teh tungkul teh mikir, sing horeng ngacay bari nga dahdir.*

Moreover, *political* and *moral commentaries* were found in the orientation move with satirical utterances. The following excerpt (5) contained these commentaries. They were taken from the story Sukma Dewa Kusuma.

- (5) Cepot : *Naha soal naon?*
 Cepot : *Dagang daging keur meuli daging... ai nu dijual daging paeh ai nu dibeuli daging hirup,*
 Dawala : *Enggeus!*
 Cepot : *Tah eta euy beda PILKADA jeung pil KB teh. Ai pil KB mah di mana poho sok jadi, ai PILKADA dimana jadi sok poho. Teu pira beda saeutik, ai ngala na gede, matak loba kajahatan-kajahatan nu di sebut White Collar Crime, kejahatan-kejahatan oleh manusia-manusia berkerah putih, jahatna na saku*
 Cepot : *Ai alat na?*
 Cepot : *Pulpen digitek-gitek. Sakalina digitek-gitek duit rakyat duit nagara pindah kana rekening pribadi. Pek teh ngaku ning ditanya teh, sok lamun aing korupsi saperak we gantung aing di Monas.*

The political and moral commentaries in excerpt (5) above were delivered in satire. The excerpt mainly contained how elected officials often forgot their promises once in power, contrasting it with the analogy of forgetting to take birth control pills. The ‘white-collar crime’ referred to financial crimes committed by people in positions of power, using a pen to embezzle public funds. The final remark was about the promise to be hanged at Monas (a famous national monument in Indonesia), exaggerating the false bravado of corrupt officials who denied their wrongdoing despite clear evidence.

Besides that, the *social commentary* strategy in the orientation move can be seen in the following excerpt (6) taken from the story Panca Suta. In this excerpt, Sanghyang Batara Guru explained the concept of *Triloka*, which refers to the three realms: Alam Mayapada, Alam Madyapada, and Alam Marcapada. He explained that these three realms are all under his responsibility, who was tasked with ensuring their safety and managing their content. Hanoman agreed, acknowledging this explanation. Sanghyang Batara Guru further elaborated that this responsibility involved guaranteeing the well-being and management of these three realms in accordance with the rules and regulations that have already been established. Additionally, it implied a collective social responsibility, emphasizing cooperation among the communities of the three realms to work together harmoniously, following the existing guidelines.

- (6) Sanghyang Batara Guru : *Tri hartina tilu, loka alam. Alam ieu, alam Mayapada, alam Madyapada, alam tengah tea, alam katiluna alam Marcapada. Tah ieu teh aya dina kungkungan ama nu tilu alam teh kabeh.*
 Hanoman : *Leres.*
 Sanghyang Batara Guru : *Jadi hartina tanggung jawab ama boh kasalematanana jeung sagala rupa nepikeun ngatur eusina ieu tilu alam teh Ama. Kantunna oge ieu teh mereun gawean babarengan gotong royong masyarakat di tilu alam ieu teh anu luyu jeung peraturan-peraturan anu geus aya.*

Moreover, the following excerpt (7) indicates the *cultural commentary* strategy in the orientation move. The excerpt was taken from the story Sukma Dewa Kusuma. In the excerpt, Batara Kresna praised Astrajingga (Cepot) for being a figure in the community who selflessly dedicates himself to serving without expecting a personal gain, encapsulating the cultural proverb ‘Sepi ing pamrih, Rame ing gawe’. Cepot then asked Dawala what the phrase meant. Dawala satirically told Cepot that he should know such a proverb because he had been associating with

nobility (menak). However, Cepot acknowledged that even the nobility nowadays rarely knew the Sundanese language or the proverb. Here, Asep used cultural commentary about the proverb.

- (7) Bataru *Atuh teu kantun ka Astrajingga salaku tokoh masyarakat, anu dina pengabdiana na teh*
 kresna : *istuning sepi ing pamrih rame ing gawe*
 Cepot : *Dawala, ai sepi ing pamrih rame ing gawe teh naon?*
 Dawala : *Ai gaul ti baheula jeung menak, tapi teh nyaho nu kitu.*
 Cepot : *Eh da menak na ayeuna mah jarang jarang apaleun kana basa sunda.*
 Dawala : *Hartina eta teh tanpa buruh dina pengabdian we, hartina teh rela istuning nga muara keur*
 kepentingan nagara ejeung bangsa, relawan mun bahasa kiwari mah eta teh.

However, before the orientation move, as integral parts of Asep's wayang golek performances, Asep's troupe from Giri Harja 3 always began with Tatalu, a gamelan music play signalling the show's start (Weintraub 2004). This opening sequence typically began one or 2 h before the show. This stage allows the audience to settle in, amuses them, and establishes the performance's cultural context. In the gamelan music play, traditional Sundanese musical instruments such as the kendang (traditional drum), saron, and gong were harmoniously played to set the stage for the themes and mood of the main show. After the tatalu, like any other feast, the Master of Ceremony (MC) formally started Asep's performance in the Sundanese language. The MC introduced the event and welcomed the audience. This opening typically included brief remarks, instructions, and prayers that the event ran smoothly. This ceremony highlighted that this opening was an official part of the event's proceedings, often following traditional or formal protocols. The MC also invited some representatives, a person, or a group organizing or sponsoring to deliver a speech. This speech acknowledged and thanked various individuals or groups involved in making the show possible, including sponsors, organizers, and special guests. Besides, the MC tells the title of a story the dalang would tell, or the *abstract* move.

After tatalu, Asep initiated the performances by playing the Kayon or Gunungan accompanied by gamelan music before telling the story. He played the *kayon* by moving it from right to left as if writing something in the air. This symbolic motion semiotically represented the world's creation and the story's unfolding in *Wayang Golek*, suggesting that the performance was crafting a narrative space where the story took place. Besides signaling the beginning of the storytelling, the Kayon was also used as the transition sign among moves in the storytelling (Figure 2).

Next, after playing the kayon, Asep played a puppet named Maktal (commonly used in the opening) to showcase its movements at the beginning of the performance. This stage is known as *ngibingkeun*, meaning dancing. Here, he demonstrated its expressive gestures, bringing it to life in front of the audience. This demonstration was



Figure 2: Asep Sunandar Sunarya played the Kayon at the beginning of his Wayang Golek performance.



Figure 3: Asep Sunandar Sunarya was dancing puppet Maktal at the beginning of his Wayang Golek performance.

accompanied by Sundanese gamelan music, led by the *Sinden* (female singer) and *Juru Alok* (male singer), creating a musical and visual experience for the audience. This dancing segment was not only part of the introduction but also occurred during the plot transitions in the storytelling, with different puppet characters performing their dances, which relate to the evolving context of the story. Each puppet's movements and dance reflected their character traits, making this stage a vital part of the visual and rhythmic storytelling in Asep's Wayang Golek performances (Figure 3).

Following the orientation move, Asep continued the story to the *complication* move. In the complication, Asep developed the plot as tensions and conflicts intensify. This move brought the audience deeper into the narrative as characters encountered challenges, made decisions, and responded to evolving situations. This action built suspense as the audience increasingly engaged with the characters' struggles. This stage was marked by problem introduction or through *Nyandra* (short description narrated by the *dalang*), character presentation, characters' decision-making presentation, and characters' action presentation. The following excerpt (8) contains the problem introduction and the characters' decision-making presentation in the dialogue.

- (8) Denawa: *Tah kawula teh hasilna narekahannana sang Nalendra. Bisa nagara kawula waluya tapi kudu ditumbalan ku jelema, di alun alun teh kudu meuncit jelema, diruang geutih na, dipake ngulas ngales ka karaton.*
- Semar : *Naon asa karareeung teuing nya.*
- Dawala : *Ai pek teh ku cepot*
- Cepot : *Banting siah ku aing, ngomong teh kamana karep paparias ditu jurig ah.*
- Arjuna : *Jadi kudu ditumbalaen teh ku jelema?*
- Denawa : *Ku jelema, jelema nu pang kolot na di dunya.*
- Cepot : *Alah pa, mangkaning bapa!*
- Semar : *Palangsiang jang!*
- Cepot : *Cicing, keun bae da aya anak, sebelum bokap sing hareupeun hela cepot!*
- Denawa : *Tah kitu ieu teh.*
- Arjuna : *Jadi ku jelema nu pang kolotna di dunya?*
- Arjuna : *Saha?*
- Denawa : *Ngarana teh mimitina S tuntungna R.*

The conversation in the excerpt above focused on Denawa (the antagonist), explaining that the oldest human sacrifice must be made for the kingdom to remain prosperous. He suggested that a person should be slaughtered in the public square, and his blood used to paint the palace. In the end, Denawa explained who the oldest person was, suggesting his name started with 'S' and ended with 'R,' further hinting at Semar (Figure 4).

In the middle of the *complication*, Asep stopped the story and entered the *monologue* move by playing a certain Wayang Golek character to address the audience directly. In this move, he exited the storyline and used



Figure 4: The character presentation at the complication move in Asep's *Wayang Golek* performance.

additional rhetorical strategies (see Table 1). This segment is commonly used to thank those who invited or supported the performance and comment reflections on various social, religious, or cultural issues. Besides, through this direct engagement, Asep could advise, share moral lessons, or express viewpoints on contemporary phenomena.

After this monologue move, Asep continued the complication move and went on to the next moves, *evaluation* and *resolution*. The evaluation move explains the causal relationships between the events that occurred during the story. In this move, Asep provided an in-depth explanation of the reasons behind the conflict or the decisions made by the characters while also linking them to moral, social, or cultural values. Following this, Asep proceeded to the *resolution* move, where the main conflict was resolved, and the storyline was concluded. This resolution is then, sometimes, followed by the *coda* move. In this move, Asep strongly delivered the story's final messages and linked them to present circumstances.

3.2 Asep Sunandar Sunarya's *Wayang Golek* movements in his performances

34 *Wayang Golek*'s movements were identified in Asep's *Wayang Golek* performances. The movements can be categorized as human-like gestures. The movements were *dancing*, *giving respect/salutation*, *raising hand*, *face*

Table 1: The rhetorical strategies of Asep Sunandar Sunarya's *Wayang Golek* performances.

Generic structure	Obligatory rhetorical strategies	Additional rhetorical strategies
Orientation	– Setting establishment – Character presentation – Background establishment	– Islamic teaching commentary – Humor Commentary – Social commentary
Complication	– Problem introduction – Character presentation – Characters' decision-making presentation – Characters' actions presentation	– Cultural commentary – Moral commentary – Political commentary – Advising audiences
A Puppet's Monologue	(Additional Rhetorical Strategies)	– Gratitude expression
Evaluation	Causal explanation	
Resolution	Characters' ending actions presentation	
Coda	A final message commentary linking the story to present circumstances	

expressing, pointing, turning around/looking back, turning body backward, moving to another place, sitting, bending body, hugging, hands on hips, nodding, Silat movement, whispering, slamming the body, falling, shooting an arrow, being killed, fighting, flipping, kicking, capturing and being captured, advising, fixing clothes and sarong, shaking head, stroking head, headbutting, breathing movement, embracing, strangling, carrying on back, knocking on the head, and slapping.

The human-like gestures used in Asep Sunandar Sunarya's Wayang Golek performances are vital in enhancing communication with the audience to add visual dimension, show expression, clarify character roles, and support verbal narration (Kress and van Leeuwen 2021; van Leeuwen 2005). Whether a simple nod or an elaborate fight scene, these gestures complement the spoken words, bringing the puppets to life and transforming the performance into a lively visual show. Movements like dancing or archery can help multimodally create an expressive display of the story to the audience. Besides, gestures like hugging can communicate emotions that dialogue alone might not fully express. The following is an example of a gesture made by Asep (Figure 5).

In relation to the narrative structure, these bodily movements correspond to specific stages in the storytelling process. For instance, gestures such as salutation, sitting, or nodding often occur at certain stages, helping introduce characters and establish social relations among them. Meanwhile, actions such as fighting, running, or shooting an arrow are used to emphasize conflict and dramatic tension. Finally, gestures such as hugging or bowing tend to visually mark reconciliation or closure. This alignment between movement and narrative function demonstrates Asep Sunandar Sunarya's mastery in synchronizing physical expression with verbal discourse. Each gesture operates not only as a visual cue but also as a rhetorical device that reinforces narrative progression and emotional resonance, transforming the Wayang Golek performance into an integrated multimodal text.

3.3 Asep Sunandar Sunarya's voice modulations in his Wayang Golek performances

When telling stories using obligatory and additional rhetorical strategies, Asep skillfully changed his voice to match each puppet character he played during the performances. By modulating the fundamental, harmonic, high, and low frequencies and adjusting formants, Asep multimodally brought each character to life, giving them unique vocal identities corresponding to their personalities and roles. Table 2 details the voice frequencies he used for the characters in his performances, demonstrating his mastery of voice manipulation in line with traditional Wayang Golek storytelling.



Figure 5: Cepot was preparing to shoot an arrow at the complication move in Asep's Wayang Golek performance.

Table 2: Asep's voice frequencies when playing certain characters of his *Wayang Golek* performances gained from the Python coding process.

No.	Character name	Fundamental frequency (Hz)	Harmonic frequency (Hz)	High frequency (Hz)	Low frequency (Hz)	Formant			
						F1 (Hz)	F2 (Hz)	F3 (Hz)	F4 (Hz)
1.	Batara Guru	1,055.92	3,167.77	5,691.40	-2,218.87	666.18	1897.94	4,792.59	7,779.27
2.	Narada	617.36	1,852.07	5,594.52	-1879.14	654.00	2,183.15	5,661.19	8,842.50
3.	Arjuna	924.10	2,772.29	5,669.80	-2,165.69	525.80	1,697.63	4,070.54	7,056.11
4.	Gatotkaca	1,100.89	3,302.68	5,706.52	-2,196.89	530.00	1,859.26	4,341.68	7,430.80
5.	Hanoman	777.89	2,333.68	5,912.99	-2,141.85	466.91	2,104.65	3,268.18	5,032.37
5.	Semar	1,021.79	3,065.36	5,646.50	-2,170.51	638.84	1,866.24	4,673.48	7,911.04
6.	Cepot	759.08	2,277.23	5,717.94	-1,842.31	497.76	1,691.47	4,141.94	7,391.14
7.	Dewala	819.56	2,458.67	5,579.09	-1,908.81	569.28	1,774.21	4,506.41	7,737.27
8.	Bibi	787.74	2,363.21	5,613.34	-1,879.07	429.23	1,430.81	3,430.09	6,611.27
9.	Buta 00	1,213.40	3,640.21	5,762.28	-2,039.74	588.00	1,592.71	3,447.30	6,193.14
10.	Buta 01	966.63	2,899.88	5,771.42	-2,053.19	518.37	1,801.34	4,309.25	7,327.07
11.	Buta 02	1,281.00	3,842.99	5,729.40	-2,103.67	593.49	1,790.62	4,216.40	7,280.23
12.	Buta 03	1,103.71	3,311.14	5,573.16	-2,334.65	874.56	2,187.07	5,070.78	7,857.15
13.	Buta 04	429.25	1,287.76	5,458.68	-1,516.12	408.65	1,978.68	5,349.41	8,519.95
14.	Buta 05	1,094.41	3,283.24	5,253.52	-2,098.55	526.23	1,666.30	4,624.19	8,366.05
15.	Buta 06	875.16	2,625.48	5,706.93	-2,050.46	554.00	1,757.42	4,395.97	7,591.99

The fundamental frequency indicates the basic pitch of a character's voice. A higher fundamental frequency (e.g., Batara Guru at 1,055.92 Hz) produced a higher-pitched voice, such as a light or sharp sound. Conversely, characters with a lower fundamental frequency (e.g., Dewala at 819.56 Hz) had a heavier, more resounding voice. Furthermore, harmonic frequency is a multiple of the fundamental frequency and creates the tone or timbre of the voice. Characters with higher harmonic values (e.g., Gatotkaca at 3,302.68 Hz) tended to have more resonant or richer voices. Moreover, high and low frequencies indicate pitch variation while speaking. High frequencies (e.g., Batara Guru with an average of 5,691.40 Hz) suggested a sharper, higher-pitched voice at certain moments. In contrast, low frequencies (e.g., Bibi with -1,879.07 Hz) indicated a deeper and lower tone.

Moreover, a formant is the frequency peak produced by resonance in the vocal tract, and each formant relates to specific components of vocal production. F1 describes mouth opening. The lower the F1 value, the smaller the mouth opening. For example, with an F1 of 429.23 Hz, Bibi had a more closed articulation than Batara Guru, who had an F1 of 666.18 Hz, indicating a wider mouth opening. F2 relates to tongue position. The higher the F2 value, the more forward the tongue position. With an F2 of 2,183.15 Hz, Narada used articulation with a more forward tongue than Semar, who had an F2 of 1,866.24 Hz. Moreover, F3 and F4 relate to the shape and size of the mouth and pharyngeal cavity. The higher the F3 and F4 values, the smaller or narrower the resonating cavity. For example, the character Narada, with an F3 of 5,661.19 Hz and an F4 of 8,842.50 Hz, might speak with a sharper tone due to a smaller oral cavity.

Generally, characters with a higher fundamental frequency speak with a lighter and sharper voice. In comparison, characters with a lower fundamental frequency speak with a heavier and more resounding voice. In the analysis process, formants influence the position of the tongue, the oral cavity, and sound resonance. The lower the F1 value, the smaller the mouth opening, while a higher F2 value indicates a more forward tongue position. Additionally, vocal harmonization is influenced by harmonic frequency, which shows how rich or resonant the voice is.

In addition to physical gestures, Asep's vocal modulation reflects the story's communicative intentions and emotional aspects. Characters with higher fundamental frequencies, such as Batara Guru or Gatotkaca, tend to express authority, intensity, or heightened emotion, while those with lower frequencies, like Bibi or Dewala, convey calmness, reflection, or humility. These variations in pitch, resonance, and formant structure are purposeful and serve as rhetorical cues that emphasize character identity, emotional tone, and relational contrast among the figures in the story. Through this controlled use of voice, Asep transforms auditory expression into a central element of meaning-making, complementing verbal narration and puppet movement. The combination of

these modes enhances audience engagement and reinforces the coherence of the storytelling in his Wayang Golek performances.

4 Conclusions

This study analyzes Asep Sunandar Sunarya's multimodal rhetorical strategies when telling stories in his Wayang Golek performances. The rhetorical strategies Asep employed can be categorized into 2 (two) types: obligatory and additional, indicating that he utilized traditional storytelling methods and creative supplementary remarks in his performances. These strategies involved his skillful combination of Wayang Golek's gestures and voice modulation to create real-like human life shows.

The obligatory rhetorical strategies refer to the essential storytelling components (Labov 1972; Tanusy and Tanto 2023), such as *introducing the characters* and *setting the scene*, which Asep executed through certain puppet movements and different voice modulation. For example, he used distinct gestures for each puppet in certain circumstances. Using gestures was one of the foundational strategies to make the audience recognize individual characters and follow the narrative he was telling. This strategy was then paired with his voice modulation technique, where Asep changed his tone, pitch, and speech patterns to match each character's personality. This technique enriched Asep's performance and made the characters more relatable and engaging. The additional rhetorical strategies were the creative elements that Asep brought into his storytelling performances beyond the conventional storytelling framework. These strategies are Asep's improvisations in dialogue. Besides, the *gamelan* music played by his troupe was not just a background score but an integral part of the storytelling, with the rhythms and melodies aligning with the gestures and voice changes to heighten the emotions and bring the narrative to life (Akbar et al. 2023).

In this way, Asep's ability to seamlessly blend traditional and additional rhetorical strategies with multimodal elements made his Wayang Golek performances a form of entertainment and a rich and immersive storytelling experience. His approach allowed him to stand out as a dalang and ensured that his performances portrayed human life to his audiences. Not surprisingly, Asep was considered to have *Mandala Wiwaha* ability (Nalan 2012) because he was very good at conveying humor in a very simple way but still provided humanity and critical values in his performances (Sulaksono 2013).

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