

A Study Of The Visual Character Of The Animated Film Si Warik As A Cultural Message Of Local Wisdom

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Abstract

Si Warik is a 3D animated short film by the D-4 Animation Study Program of Dian Nuswantoro University (Udinus) Semarang. The feature screen version of this film successfully passed the curation and was screened at The Student World Impact Film Festival (SWIFF) 2023. The visual characters in the animated film Si Warik are representations of the icon of the city of Semarang, Warak Ngendog. The Ngendog Warak is a mythological creature that symbolizes the cultural harmony of the unity of the Javanese, Chinese, and Arab ethnicities. Currently, locally made animated characters still cannot compete with foreign-made animated characters that were once popular. The presence of the character of Si Warik is important and interesting to research because it is able to exist in international festivals. This research aims to identify design elements that are able to carry cultural messages about local wisdom. A descriptive qualitative method was used to analyze the visual characters in the animated film Si Warik with an aesthetic approach. Qualitatively, the results of the study show that cultural messages are able to be represented through design elements according to the visualization of style, personality, attitude, and proportion. This is represented through facial expressions, postures, and attributes. This research is expected to be an academic reference in the field of the creative economy subsector to create more competitive characters and be able to encourage the development of the creative industry.

Keywords: Visual Characters, The Warik, Local Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

The development of animated film production in Indonesia is currently showing significant progress. The Indonesian Animation and Content Industry Association (Ainaki 2020) (2020) mentioned the continued increase in the number of animation studios spread across 23 cities throughout Indonesia. In the period from 2015 to 2019, Indonesia's animation industry grew by 153%, with an average increase of 26% per year.

This advancement is driven by the high demand for animated creative content across various media platforms, including social media. However, local animated films are still not able to host in their own country. Including the characters, the characters are still less popular than the animated characters from outside. This is due to the limited number of skilled human resources, lack of investment, and lack of opportunities to the international market (Nayaka, T. dan Dananjaya 2024).

Based on this phenomenon, this study discusses one of the works from the D-4 Animation Study Program of Dian Nuswantoro University (Udinus), Semarang, namely the 3D animated short film, Si Warik. The presence of Si Warik's visual character as a children's spectacle is interesting and important to research, because it is inspired by the cultural icon of the city of Semarang, Warak Ngendog. The Ngendog Warak is a fictional animal, which is usually presented in the Dugderan tradition. Warak comes from the word "waro'a" or "wira'i" (Arabic) which means "restraint". This imaginary animal and icon of the Dugderan ritual is then interpreted as a symbol of cultural acculturation because its entire appearance represents the cultural symbol of the three ethnic peoples of Semarang City, namely Javanese, Chinese and Arabic (Laras 2018).

In 2023, the animated film Si Warik has been screened as a cinema film, and the feature screen version has successfully passed curation and was shown at The Student World Impact

Film Festival (SWIFF) 2023. This achievement is proof that the local works are able to compete at the global level. Si Warik's creative economy product presents two main characters, namely Warik and Dian, plus Endog's supporting characters. The animated film Si Warik is presented to create a new world for children between the ages of 6-13 years. Through their narrative, these animated characters have a mission to convey educational messages, especially about the natural resources of the archipelago, as a cultural background and local wisdom of the city of Semarang (Information Si Warik 1, 2022).

In the context of visual communication design, animated films are designed to convey meaning through their visual elements. The characters are constructed to play the narrative with a multiplicity of styles, so that they are able to evoke the emotions and thoughts of the audience.

Based on the results of the research team's interview with Noor Muchammad, Lead Post-Production from DanDin Animation Studio, since its release in 2020, the animated film Si Warik has undergone three changes in the structure of its character's appearance. Episodes of Si Warik's animation can be watched through the Udinus Animation Youtube channel.

The animated film Si Warik features the setting of suburban life, many of which feature natural scenery with the cultural background of the people of Semarang. In each episode, the actors in the animated film Si Warik provide knowledge to children in interesting and entertaining ways, especially through adventure stories that are considered to be able to meet children's visual tastes.

Visual characters in an animated production are considered to be one of the important factors that can affect children's cognitive development. Animated films can be a means to convey messages, because through films, children can capture the message from the conversations or movements made by each of the characters, so that children can easily imitate (Hawa 2023). In line with what Hawa conveyed in her research on visual characters for children, visual effects in animation can affect children's cognitive development in a positive way and help children understand moral and cultural values (Hawa 2023).

The animated film Si Warik is also one of the potential children's spectacles, because through the visualization of its characters, it seeks to convey a cultural message that is far from violent elements. The study of visual characters in the animated film Si Warik is a work of art that is inseparable from an aesthetic approach, as a visual strategy to convey cultural values through its visual elements. The creation of visual characters based on local wisdom which aims to provide education to children as the target audience, can also indirectly contribute to the sub-sector of creative economy products, especially in encouraging the development of the creative industry. Animation can be an effective educational tool for children and increase their motivation to learn (Buckingham 2003).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study examines the creation of visual characters of the animated film Si Warik and the reading of its visual elements as messages with an aesthetic approach. The method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through literature studies, observations, and interviews. The essence of this approach is to provide an understanding of visual elements as a meaningful aesthetic in the creation of visual characters. The aesthetic approach emphasizes aspects of art and design in relation to aesthetic appeal, specifically through the aspects of lines, aspects of shapes, and aspects of color. The aesthetic approach is also placed in a cultural context, because its existence has a relationship with various things related in space and time, where the work was born and developed (Piliang 2005).

The study of the visual character of the animated film Si Warik also refers to the aesthetic creation of characters according to the physical dimension (White 2009):

1. Character style, in the form of illustration style used, such as the use of shapes and color lines.
2. Character personality through the determination of the visual elements used.
3. Visualization of attitudes through visual gestures that can sharpen character traits.
Shape the proportions of the character, ranging from head shape and body shape, to reflect certain proportions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. The Character of the Warik

In the animated film Si Warik, there are three visual characters that appear in each episode, namely:

Visual Characters

Warik is the central character, who is visualized as a boy who wears a yellow t-shirt costume, with a red jacket, and pants, and always uses the attributes of a helmet resembling the icon of Warak Ngendog. Warik is narrated as having a brave soul, loves adventure, sometimes behaves ignorantly, but easily panics.



Figure 1. The Character of the Warik

(Sumber: <https://animasi.dinus.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2022/11/Informasi-SI-Warik-1.pdf>, 2025).

2. Visual Character Dian

Dian is one of the central characters who supports Warik's narrative. Dian is Warik's best friend. Dian is also visualized as a smart girl who loves to read books. Dian did not talk much, calm, but had a brave nature. In terms of costumes and attributes, Dian wears glasses and a blue shirt with pants of the same color.



Figure 2. Dian's Character

(Sumber: <https://animasi.dinus.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2022/11/Informasi-SI-Warik-1.pdf>, 2025)

3. Character Visual Endog

Endog is a companion character that only appears if there is a "Dugder" summons. Eggs are usually brought up to find solutions to various problems faced by Warik. The egg is visualized in the form of a yellow egg robot that has Google-like capabilities, aka can answer any question.



Figure 3. Endog Characters

(Sumber: <https://animasi.dinus.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2022/11/Informasi-SI-Warik-1.pdf>, 2025).

In the cultural context, Si Warik's animated film is in accordance with the definition of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) in 2010, that the creative industry includes various activities, products, and services, all of which can be linked to three criteria, namely: The existence of input from human creativity; The existence of means for symbolic messages: The existence of potential content, intellectual property, belonging to individuals or groups, including copyrights, trademarks, and designs (Wardani, W. G. W., Syahid dan Akbar 2023)

Narratively, the characters in the animated film Si Warik are visualized as the adventures of two friends Warik and Dian who live in rural areas. They face various life problems in the world of children, involving knowledge about nature, flora, fauna, and human interaction. The story setting is built at the same time as the two characters as cultural creatures who have basic needs in life, ranging from the need for affection for each other, expectations, values and social responsibilities, to the challenges that may be faced. Through Si Warik's narration, children are invited to learn to understand themselves as individuals who have advantages and disadvantages, which they can perceive through the reading of visual elements.

Discussion

Based on the formulation of the physical and aesthetic dimensions, the study of Warik's visual character can be described as follows:

1. Style Visualization

a. Character of Warik

- 1) Line aspect: The entire character of Warik uses the dominance of rounded curved lines to portray a friendly character.
- 2) Shape Aspect: Warik's head and body are oval in shape with a stocky solid body. This oval shape supports the creation of visual characters that are more adaptive and energetic with their environment.
- 3) Color Aspect: The color composition of the Warik character's costume is dominated by red and yellow primary colors, as the color effect tends to contract, which gives a warm and vibrant impression. The dominance of this color is also taken from the color elements of Warak Ngendog which often use red and yellow elements, as a representation of Chinese and Javanese culture.

a. Dian's Character

- 1) The line aspect uses a combination of curved lines and straight lines. Straight lines indicate assertiveness, while curved lines give a friendly impression.
- 2) Shape Aspect: Dian's head and body tend to be rectangular with a slender body. This sleek shape supports the creation of more agile visual characters.

- 3) Color Aspect: The color composition of Dian's character is dominated by blue, as a color effect that gives a sense of peace. In an interview with the research team with Leonardo Kevin, IT Lead from Udinus, the choice of blue is also an academic symbol of Dian Nuswantoro University, as a vocational education institution that prioritizes creativity based on digital technology.
- b. Character Endog
 - 1) The line aspect uses a full curved line that shows flexibility and a dynamic effect.
 - 2) Shape Aspect: The shape of the Endong resembles an egg that has the senses of eyes and mouth. The shape of the eyes is without the eyeballs, while the mouth is only in the form of curved lines that occasionally show movement. This egg shape refers to the meaning of the word "Ngendog" produced by Warak, meaning to produce something new, or the birth of knowledge.
 - 3) Color Aspect: The color composition of Endog is dominated by yellow-orange color with red accents as triangular and circular signs on the surface of Endog's body, to give the impression of a technological device that always has many buttons. The visualization of the style of the three characters presents an image that can be perceived by children based on their learning experiences, namely children who are friendly, friendly, and dynamic, according to their age who likes to find out and adventure. Image is something that is perceptually accepted, but does not exist substantially (Piliang 2004). Meanwhile, perception is the experience of objects, events, or relationships obtained by inferring information and interpreting messages (Rakhmat 2008). In the first episode titled "Yahhh Gosong", which was released on April 5, 2023, Si Warik's animas has been watched 4,254 times with more than 1 million subscribers. This shows that there is an interest in the spectacle of Si Warik, which is based on visual perception.

2. Personality Visualization

The main character of Warik has a cheerful personality, likes to joke, likes to be mischievous, but has an adventurous spirit, This personality is depicted through line elements such as a large eye circle line with a bright matar ball. Then the wide mouth line and often laughing shows a row of neat and clean teeth.

In (Siswanto 2010) research, the personality of the Javanese people is often categorized as an "Eastern personality" that is concerned with spiritual life. However, the Javanese people are also known as a society that is bound together to realize an arrangement on the basis of kinship, namely a personality that likes to work together, help and exchange. Petulangan in the animated film Si Warik also narrates about efforts to help others and help find solutions to problems faced by the community in their environment.

3. Attitude Visualization

The character of Warik's attitude is described as a boy who always wants to move and do physical activities. Both figures reflect the visual image of a boy who is full of curiosity. Warik has the visual power to build an interesting place in the world of children. In children's personalities, they usually look for behavioral models.

In the cultural approach, the characters in the animated film Si Warik reflect the lives of children who in their daily lives often dialogue with Javanese accents. The visualization of attitudes in the spectacle can be considered as an artifact of design that becomes a means of communication for the culture of the Javanese people through the media. The Javanese language is also a culture that needs to be preserved, as a form of local wisdom about the meaning of politeness and familiarity. In the Javanese language, there are Ngoko, Krama, and Krama Inggil. For daily conversations between friends, Javanese Ngoko is usually used. Meanwhile, Krama is

for a more polite conversation, and Krama Inggil shows a level of more respect for the interlocutor (Ismawati 2019)

4. Proportional Visualization

The proportional characters of Warik and Dian are depicted as having the bodies of elementary school-age children with heads larger than their bodies. In animated visualization, large head proportions are often used to give a certain impression, such as funny, childish, intelligent or wise. (Fadly 2023) mentioned that specifically the head is one of the organs of the body that is much stronger than other organs. The reason is because all memory is stored in the brain, so the source of thought is in the head. Thus, Warik's body proportions are also perceived as intelligent, solutive characters and able to be wise with the help of knowledge references sought through the Egg robot. This is in accordance with the general context of Si Warik's characters which are visualized through dynamic and curious behavior.

Broadly speaking, the cultural message of local wisdom in the visual character of the animated film Si Warik can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Design Elements and Cultural Messages
In the Visual Character of the Warik

Karakter Visual	Elemen Desain	Pesan Budaya
Warik, Dian, and Endog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Style Visualization - Personality Visualization - Attitude Visualization - Proportional Visualization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Style visualization is dominated by aspects of curved lines, oval shapes, and primary and secondary colors. Displays a friendly, friendly, and dynamic image of the character. - Personality visualization shows individuals who are happy to help and work together. - Attitude visualization displays dialogue style with Javanese accent - Proportion visualization displays images of intelligent children.

Visually, the animated film Si Warik features characters who are close to the problems of children in the social environment, where the visual characters of the children are located. The visual characters in the animation place their image as a depiction of the narrative of cultural beings, because their existence is part of the culture of the society in which the animation is made and broadcast.

When associated with Abraham Maslow's theory (Muazaroh 2019), it is stated that humans are cultural creatures who have various basic needs for life, ranging from the need for affection for others, hope, moral values and responsibilities, to suffering or sadness. In this series, the characters are shown as children who are taught to understand themselves as cultured human beings.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the visual characters in the animated film Si Warik can be formed through formalistic aesthetic aspects. Visual characters based on the local cultural wisdom of the city of Semarang are represented through the aspects of lines, shape aspects, and color aspects, through the visualization of style, personality, attitude, and proportion. The basics of creating visual characters in animated films have an important role because they can build visual language that children are able to perceive by influencing their thoughts and feelings. The perception of the physical dimension of characters through visual language also indirectly affects the process

of forming children's characters as part of education. The visual image displayed on the characters of Warik, Dian, and Endog in the animated film *Si Warik* is able to show the relationship between what is seen physically, what is known through the meaning of its elements as a cultural message, and what is imagined as imagination through the visual narrative as a whole. The visualization of the character of the animated film *Si Warik* also shows compatibility with the cultural background of the city of Semarang, through the similarity of a number of visual elements that represent the icon of Warak Ngendog. This research study can be one of the concrete discussions that the creation of visual characters in animated films has an important role because it can indirectly convey cultural messages in interesting, aesthetic, educational, and entertaining ways. Creativity in the creation of visual characters based on local wisdom is expected to encourage the development of other competitive creative economy products.

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