

# EXPLORING OF “SERUMPUN” CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION IN INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN COMEDY FILMS AS AUDIOVISUAL PUBLIC PEDAGOGY

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## Abstract

This study explores the intersection of cross-cultural education and audiovisual public pedagogy through the analysis of mise-en-scène in Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films. The authors focus on the “Serumpun” relationship, reflecting the shared cultural and historical roots of these two nations. The research investigates how comedy films serve as mediums for cultural expression and education, fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding. The authors use a qualitative approach

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that integrates semiotic and content analysis to examine three critically acclaimed Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films released between 2000 and 2023. The analysis underscores the significance of *mise-en-scène* in conveying cultural symbolism and values, particularly in reflecting the nuances of the “Serumpun” relationship. Through comparative analysis, the researchers reveal how these films utilize humour, family dynamics, and visual aesthetics to address and reflect societal norms, cultural heritage, and the complexities of modern life in both countries. The findings indicate that these comedy films serve as informal yet highly effective audiovisual educational platforms, playing a critical role in both the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, while simultaneously fostering cross-cultural understanding. The pedagogical potential of film is particularly evident in its ability to shape public perceptions, positioning these films as dual-function cultural artifacts and educational tools. Films engage public pedagogy, engaging audiences on both emotional and intellectual levels; these films transcend mere entertainment, becoming catalysts for cultural discourse and vehicles for deeper societal reflection to encourage a more profound understanding of the complexities of societal changes, cultural norms, and the evolution of humour in reflecting contemporary issues as intercultural relationships.

**Keywords:** *“Serumpun” relationship, cross-cultural education, film, Indonesian, Malaysian, audiovisual public pedagogy.*

## Introduction

The term “Serumpun”, signifying ‘one root’, poignantly captures the intricate web of shared history, language, and culture that entwines Indonesia and Malaysia [Clark 2013]. This deep-seated connection forms a vital backdrop against which this paper is positioned, aiming to dissect and understand the nuanced role of comedy films from these nations in facilitating cross-cultural education. Predominantly, this exploration is centred around the concept of *mise-en-scène*, a pivotal element in film studies, encompassing the arrangement of everything visible in a frame – actors, lighting, décor, props, and costumes [Ortiz 2014; Skjerseth 2020]. This study is grounded in the belief that such films are not mere vessels of entertainment but potent mediums of cultural expression and pedagogy. The choice of Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films as the focal point of this research is underpinned by the genre’s inherent capacity to reflect societal norms, challenge existing paradigms, and act as conduits for cultural discourse [Maksum 2022]. These films serve as a reflective surface, revealing shared customs, linguistic threads, and historical narratives, thereby providing a fertile ground for exploring the “Serumpun” relationship.

In the ever-changing landscape of film study, the intersection of cultures on the screen and the resulting intercultural interactions, combined with shared comedic storylines, have become a significant focus [Dixon 2007]. The popularity of what is newly termed “cross-border humour” in engaging audiences has drawn attention to Indonesian and Malaysian humour films [Grossman 2017]. These films reflect cultural and identity aspects and intertwine them with socio-political elements within their narratives. Beyond being a visual spectacle, the film serves as a dynamic medium for cross-cultural dialogues, facilitating the exchange and exploration of ideas representing collective experiences within and beyond national confines [Lamarre 2002]. This medium connects with viewers in unconventional ways through visual aesthetics, performances, dialogue, and storytelling [Dubowsky 2016].

Mise-en-scène is central in cinematic storytelling, involving elements like set design, costuming, lighting, and spatial arrangements [Simou 2022]. These elements are crucial in conveying cultural symbolism and meaning. Scholars such as Bou [2019] and Skjerseth [2020] highlight the importance of visual elements in communicating cultural norms and values. In this context, mise-en-scène becomes a cultural site where Indonesian and Malaysian elements interact, highlighting similarities and differences [Wilcox 2016]. Meanwhile, humour, transcending language and culture, is a transformative agent that fosters connections and enhances understanding across cultures [Gell 2006]. The development of cinema in Indonesia and Malaysia is rooted in their unique historical, socio-political, and cultural landscapes. Despite their proximity, these countries have distinct narratives focusing on national and ethnic identity complexities, as explored by scholars like Heryanto and Khoo in Southeast Asian cinema [Tse 2021].

This research discusses mise-en-scène in Indonesian and Malaysian comedic films as a platform for intercultural dialogue. It highlights the role of shared comedic experiences in fostering transcultural understanding amidst socio-political challenges. Voci introduces the concept of “para-animation”, exploring creative intersections between mainstream and avant-garde animation [Voci 2023]. Similarly, Türeli investigates film’s role in design education, showcasing its potential as a tool for visualizing urban landscapes [Türeli 2021], thereby emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between cinematic representation and architectural creativity. The urgency of this research stems from a critical need to understand the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in an increasingly globalized world. The unique socio-cultural landscape of Indonesia and Malaysia, characterized by shared yet distinct cultural identities, presents an exemplary case study. In an era where cultural homogenization and erosion of traditional values are prevalent concerns, analysing the role of popular media, especially comedy films, in preserving and promoting cultural heritage becomes imperative. Furthermore, the growing influence of such

media in shaping public perceptions and attitudes underscores the relevance and timeliness of this study. This research addresses the underexplored potential of comedy films in the realm of public pedagogy and cross-cultural education, especially in the context of the Indonesian-Malaysian “Serumpun” relationship. Despite the rich cultural tapestry these films present, academic discourse often overlooks their educational value.

Accordingly, this study investigates how Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films, through their *mise-en-scène*, function as pedagogical tools for cross-cultural education within the broader “Serumpun” framework. The research investigates how visual aesthetics, spatial compositions, and cultural symbols embedded within these cinematic texts facilitate the articulation and negotiation of shared and divergent identities by conducting a comparative analysis of selected films from both countries. This approach underscores the educational potential of comedy as a conduit for public pedagogy, especially in multicultural and postcolonial contexts. More specifically, the objectives of this study are: (1) to analyse the *mise-en-scène* in selected Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films and examine how these visual elements reflect cultural values, social critique, and national identity; (2) to compare and contrast how both national cinemas engage with themes of humour, tradition, and modernity in their portrayal of everyday life; and (3) to explore the potential of these films as platforms for intercultural understanding and informal education across national boundaries. In doing so, the research positions cinema as a dialogic space where cultural commonalities and tensions can be meaningfully examined, offering critical insights into the pedagogical functions of popular visual culture in Southeast Asia.

## Method

This research delves deeply into the “Serumpun” relationship, which captures the shared roots between Indonesia and Malaysia, examined through the lens of comedy films. Its authors investigate the subtle role these films play in cross-cultural education, emphasising *mise-en-scène* as a fundamental aspect of film studies. The selection of Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films for study is due to their ability to reflect societal norms, challenge established paradigms, and encourage cultural discourse. The research sits at the intersection of film study, culture, and education, focusing on how humour in these films fosters intercultural interactions. The appeal of “cross-border humour” as it captivates audiences with its reflection of cultural and identity issues, often intertwined with socio-political narratives that engage viewers through visual aesthetics, performances, dialogue, and storytelling, serving as potent mediums for cross-cultural dialogue.

The five films selected for this study – *Warkop DKI Reborn*, *Susah Sinyal*, *Hantu Kak Limah*, *Polis Evo*, and *Ola Bola* – were purposefully chosen based on

a set of rigorous qualitative criteria. These included the films' demonstrated cultural relevance, public and critical reception, and richness in visual and thematic material suitable for *mise-en-scène* and pedagogical analysis. Critical acclaim was defined through a triangulation of sources: national and regional film award nominations and wins, positive scholarly or journalistic reviews, and high audience ratings on platforms such as IMDb and local film databases. Each film had to (1) originate from either Indonesia or Malaysia; (2) belong to the comedy or comedy-drama genre; (3) be released between 2000 and 2023; and (4) explicitly address themes such as family, societal change, multicultural identity, or traditional values that all of which intersect with the "Serumpun" framework. Furthermore, their *mise-en-scène* had to present strong visual cues through set, costume, or spatial storytelling that communicate sociocultural messages relevant to cross-cultural education. This selection ensures a balanced comparative representation of contemporary Indonesian and Malaysian comedic cinema, aligned with the study's focus on public pedagogy and cultural negotiation through humour.

The researchers have adopted a qualitative approach, combining semiotic and content analysis, and is interdisciplinary, bridging film studies, cultural studies, and educational theories [Moran 2002; Schuermans, Loopmans and Vandenabeele 2012; Audissino 2017; Chandler 2017]. They selected three Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films released from 2000 to 2023 that have received significant public and critical acclaim, focusing on those with cultural themes and symbols relevant to the "Serumpun" context. The films' narratives, themes, characters, dialogues, and visual elements are examined by means of content analysis, especially in exploring aspect cultural, historical, and socio-political narratives [Table 1]. Meanwhile, semiotic analysis deciphers the meanings in *mise-en-scène*, such as set designs, costumes, lighting, and spatial arrangements, to reveal more profound cultural significance [Chandler 2017].

The researchers in this study also apply intercultural communication theories to understand how these films promote cross-cultural understanding and dialogue, primarily focusing on how humour negotiates cultural differences and influences audience perceptions. Comparative analysis underpins the portrayal of cultural elements in Indonesian and Malaysian films, reflecting each country's unique socio-cultural landscape. Data collection includes detailed viewing of selected films, note-taking, and capturing critical scenes for analysis, along with interviews from film critics, academics, and viewers from both countries for diverse insights. Data analysis uses thematic coding to identify patterns and themes underpinned by theoretical frameworks from relevant disciplines.

To operationalize the semiotic analysis, each selected film was closely examined through a frame-by-frame breakdown, focusing on elements of *mise-en-scène* like

**Table 1.****Instrument for the analysis of Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films**

Stage	Description	Tools/Approaches
1. Film selection	Establish criteria for film selection based on origin, genre, release period, and themes relevant to cultural and educational aspects.	-
	- Country of origin: Indonesia and Malaysia	
	- Genre: Comedy and comedy-drama	
	- Release period: 2000 to 2023	
2. Data sources	Identify primary sources for gathering film data.	- Film databases [IMDb]
	- Academic articles, reviews, and studies on films.	- Academic databases [Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus]
	- Background information and director's notes.	- Official film websites and press kits
	- Access to films for analysis.	- Streaming platforms [Netflix, Vidio, Prime Video, regional services]
3. Data collection	Outline methods for collecting data on films.	-
	- Watching films for theme and mise-en-scène analysis.	- Film viewing
	- Systematic analysis of film content including dialogue, narrative, and visual style.	- Content analysis
	- Analysis of signs and symbols within the mise-en-scène.	- Semiotic analysis
4. Analysis framework	Describing the analytical framework for examining films.	-
	- Identifying and discussing central themes.	- Thematic analysis
	- Comparing and contrasting themes and mise-en-scène elements.	- Comparative analysis
5. Reporting	Explain organization and reporting of findings.	-
	- Structure of analysis, integration of quotes/descriptions, use of visual aids.	- Reporting format

spatial composition, lighting, costume, set design, and visual motifs as cultural signifiers that encode ideological, historical, and social meanings. For instance, traditional Malay village backdrops in *Hantu Kak Limah* or the nostalgic urban imagery in *Warkop DKI Reborn* were analysed as visual narratives that reflect evolving

national identities and communal values. These visual cues were interpreted using Barthesian semiotic theory (denotation/connotation) and anchored in the socio-political and cultural contexts of each nation, enabling the decoding of dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings based on audience responses and scholarly interpretations. Simultaneously, a qualitative content analysis was conducted by applying a multi-step coding procedure. Thematic indicators were inductively derived and refined into four primary analytical categories: (1) portrayal of family dynamics and generational identity; (2) representation of socio-cultural issues through humour; (3) linguistic strategies in comedy (wordplay, satire, irony); and (4) educational and moral narratives conveyed through plot development. Then, respondents' feedback was triangulated with these thematic codes to ensure analytic validity and to capture the layered reception of filmic content.

### Results and discussion

The intrinsic power of film to mirror and mold societal norms and cultural values is profoundly evident in the realms of Indonesian and Malaysian filmmaking serve not just as a source of entertainment but as a potent tool for public pedagogy and cross-cultural education. It focuses on the shared cultural themes, the role of *mise-en-scène* as an educational instrument, and the underlying implications for cross-cultural understanding between Indonesia and Malaysia, two nations bound by shared linguistic and cultural roots, often referred to as “Serumpun”. Both Indonesian and Malaysian films, as depicted in the selected works, extensively utilize humour and family dynamics as pivotal elements are mirrors reflecting the societal norms and cultural ethos of their respective countries [Table 2]. In Indonesian films these elements are employed as a discernible emphasis on the evolving youth culture and the challenges of modern parenting, respectively. Similarly, Malaysian films navigate through traditional beliefs and the nuances of multicultural interactions.

The humour in these films is not a mere comedic device but a cultural lens (see Table 2) [Pérez Ríu 2017]. It provides insights into what each society laughs about, which is often what they care about. Therefore, comedic elements become a vehicle to address social issues and cultural specificities subtly. The portrayal of family dynamics further adds depth, highlighting the societal values embedded within family structures and relationships. This shared approach in both countries' cinemas underscores a common cultural sentiment that values humour and familial bonds as essential to societal reflection. *Mise-en-scène* in these films is a background element and a character, telling a story beyond the dialogues and plots. The urban landscapes of Indonesia, the traditional Malay villages, the modern offices, and the rural landscapes depicted in these films are not mere settings (see Table 2). They are visual narratives that communicate cultural heritage and modern challenges of these societies.

**Table 2.****Comparative analysis of mise-en-scène and educational aspects in Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films**

Country	Film title	Theme description	Mise-en-scène aspects	Educational aspect
Indonesia	<i>Warkop DKI Reborn</i>	Revival of famous comedy characters in everyday scenarios.	Classic settings, slapstick humour, colourful costumes.	Offers insight into the evolution of Indonesian humour and comedy styles.
Indonesia	<i>Susah Sinyal</i>	A single mother balancing work and family life.	Modern office spaces, rural Indonesian landscapes.	Highlights challenges faced by modern working parents in Indonesia.
Malaysia	<i>Hantu Kak Limah</i>	Comedic horror story set in a Malaysian village.	Traditional Malay village setting, local costumes.	Explores traditional Malaysian beliefs and rural village life.
Malaysia	<i>Polis Evo</i>	Buddy cop action-comedy reflecting Malaysian society.	Urban environments, police uniforms, action sequences.	Discusses themes of teamwork and cultural diversity in Malaysia.
Malaysia	<i>Ola Bola</i>	Sports drama about Malaysia's national football team.	1980s Malaysia, football stadiums, period costumes.	Showcases Malaysia's multiculturalism and unity, highlighting the unifying power of sports.

These films' narrative and visual elements collectively serve as an informal yet influential educational platform and offer a window into societal changes, cultural norms, and the evolution of humour in reflecting contemporary issues (see Table 3). Films like *Warkop DKI Reborn* and *Ola Bola* are not just sources of entertainment but are educational with provide cultural insights and historical context, making them valuable tools for public pedagogy [Biesta 2012; Schuermans, Loopmans and Vandenabeele 2012]. These films educate not through didactic lessons but through stories that resonate with the audience and reflect their lives, aspirations, and conflicts (see Table 3). This form of public pedagogy is particularly effective as it engages its audience emotionally and intellectually, making the learning experience more profound and enduring. By blending entertainment with education, these films have the potential to influence public opinion, shape cultural perceptions, and foster a better understanding of societal dynamics.

**Table 3.****Audience perceptions on the cultural and societal impact of Indonesian and Malaysian films**

Country	Respondent	Film discussed	Perception and impact
Indonesia	R1	<i>Warkop dKI Reborn</i>	“The film brilliantly bridges past and present Indonesian comedy, making me appreciate the evolution of our humour. It’s a cultural lesson wrapped in laughter.”
Indonesia	R2	<i>Susah Sinyal</i>	“It reflects our society’s struggle with modernity vs. tradition, especially in family relationships. It made me reevaluate my own life choices.”
Malaysia	R3	<i>Hantu Kak Limah</i>	“It humorously captures the essence of Malaysian rural life, reminding us of our roots and the importance of community. I found it enlightening and entertaining.”
Malaysia	R4	<i>Polis Evo</i>	“The film’s exploration of teamwork amidst diversity is a mirror to Malaysian society’s strengths. It’s a call to embrace our differences.”
Indonesia	R5	<i>Warkop DKI Reborn</i>	“Seeing new actors take on classic roles was nostalgic yet fresh. It showed how certain cultural aspects remain beloved across generations.”
Malaysia	R6	<i>Ola Bola</i>	“It’s more than a sports movie; it’s a narrative on unity and achieving dreams together regardless of background. It beautifully showcases the Malaysian <i>muhibbah</i> spirit.”
Indonesia	R7	<i>Susah Sinyal</i>	“The film’s portrayal of a working mother’s life in Indonesia resonated with me deeply. It’s a reflection of the modern Indonesian woman’s challenges.”
Malaysia	R8	<i>Hantu Kak Limah</i>	“The blend of comedy and horror with Malaysian cultural elements was perfect. It made me appreciate our folklore and the creative ways we can tell our stories.”

Then, from encoded messages and potential decodings, *Warkop DKI Reborn* revives beloved comedic characters and serves as a cultural artifact, encoding a celebration of traditional Indonesian comedy and its relevance in contemporary society. This encoded message offers a spectrum of decodings: a dominant reading may see it as an homage to the legacy of *Warkop DKI*, evoking nostalgia and appreciation for traditional humour; a negotiated reading might enjoy the humour

while questioning its modern relevance; and an oppositional reading could critique the film for relying too heavily on nostalgia, lacking contemporary resonance. Like *Susah Sinyal*, it encodes the struggles of modern Indonesians in juggling work-life balance, resonating with the audience's experiences of negotiating traditional family values and the demands of contemporary work life. Audiences may predominantly empathize with the protagonist, seeing their challenges reflected on screen. However, some may negotiate this portrayal with personal reservations about its depiction of work or family dynamics. In contrast, others might view the film as oversimplifying the complexities working mothers face, suggesting an oppositional decoding.

In Malaysia, *Hantu Kak Limah* humorously explores traditional beliefs and village life, encoding a message that intertwines Malaysian folklore with comedic elements. This can lead to a dominant reading that appreciates the cultural references and enjoys the humour. This negotiated reading has mixed feelings about the blend of horror and comedy, and an oppositional reading critiquing the potential trivialization of traditional beliefs (see Table 3). Meanwhile, *Polis Evo* reflects Malaysian society through a buddy cop narrative, encoding teamwork and cultural diversity themes to overcome societal challenges. Audiences might dominantly receive this as a positive message, appreciating the film's emphasis on unity and diversity [Table 3]. However, there could be a negotiated decoding that appreciates the message but questions the portrayal of law enforcement or an oppositional decoding that disagrees with the representation of cultural diversity or critiques the genre's handling of serious themes. Lastly, *Ola Bola* encodes a unifying message by portraying Malaysia's national football team, highlighting the power of sports in bridging cultural divides. This message might be dominantly decoded as inspirational, showing how sports can unify diverse groups. However, some viewers might negotiate this interpretation, pondering over historical accuracy or the depth of cultural representation (see Table 3), whereas others could oppose it, perceiving the film as idealizing or oversimplifying the complexities of multiculturalism.

One crucial area of investigation in this discussion pertains to the key significance of local language as a mechanism for cultivating international bonds [Kiminami and Duggan 2022; Rajas, Barral and Baños 2023]. Language has a significant role in facilitating effective communication and fostering international understanding by serving as a powerful tool for overcoming cultural divides as educational mode. Language humour is a fundamental tool in creating hilarious situations that surpass cultural barriers, achieved through the manipulation of words, speech, and meanings. Linguistic elements such as wordplay, puns, and skilful repartee are deliberately utilised by filmmakers to create linguistic environments that facilitate the collective sharing of comic experiences among viewers from various cultural backgrounds. This practice aligns with the notion of fun learning, similar to a technological marvel,

as it utilises linguistic intricacies to establish linkages amidst linguistic variances in teaching-learning methods [Sampurno and Camelia 2020; Wiratmoko and Sampurno 2021; Sampurno 2023]. The deliberate and purposeful incorporation of humour into language enhances conversations in public pedagogy setting and creates an environment where cultural discussions can take place within the framework of fun learning [Ramani and Eason 2015].

The examination of cultural dynamics through comedy is further enhanced by the inclusion of the logical aspect. Humour rooted in logic serves as a medium for fostering critical thinking by use of humorous channels [Lionis 2021]. Through the skilful integration of tales that traverse improbable settings, unexpected plot developments, and exaggerated aspects, filmmakers compel audiences to engage in a critical analysis of the socio-cultural frameworks that form the foundation of the concept of “logic”. The aforementioned methodology serves as a medium for both entertainment and cognitive engagement, seamlessly aligning with the primary objective of this study, which is to decipher the impact of humour on cultural dynamics. The capacity of humour to stimulate critical involvement, thereby facilitating deep investigations into the fundamental components of humorous narratives and functions as a catalyst for facilitating cross-cultural connections, prompting viewers to engage in a critical re-evaluation of their preconceived notions and perspectives [Lucardie 2014; Rajas, Barral and Baños 2023]. The convergence of these varied comedic approaches results in a vibrant interaction of cultural negotiations within the *mise-en-scène* of Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films. As the integration of these strategies occurs, it gives rise to transnational comedy, a captivating phenomenon that possesses the ability to transcend linguistic, and intellectual barriers into public pedagogy about cross-cultural of “Serumpun”. This detailed research provides a thorough examination of the various strategies employed in these films, revealing significant observations on the complex nature of cultural interactions through the use of humour that reflect and potentially reinforce specific cultural narratives to highlighting the pedagogical role of film in shaping perceptions of race and education.

### **A brief excursion into the cinemas of Malaysia and Indonesia in dialogue with European film traditions**

Combining Indonesian and Malaysian cinema with European cinematic traditions offers fertile terrain for cross-cultural commentary. This is particularly evident when approached through the lens of comedy as a narrative device and a socio-political register. European cinema, particularly Italian neorealism, French poetic realism, and British social satire, has long foregrounded everyday struggles, community life, and ironic commentary on class and cultural identity. Similar

thematic tendencies appear in Southeast Asian comedic traditions. In these traditions, comedy functions as a vehicle for cultural introspection and socio-political critique.

Indonesian and Malaysian comedic films such as *Warkop DKI Reborn*, *Susah Sinyal*, *Hantu Kak Limah*, *Polis Evo*, and *Ola Bola* reflect a hybrid cinematic vernacular. This vernacular fuses the didactic tendencies of public pedagogy with the local specificities of language, humour, and mise-en-scène. In Jacques Tati's or Roberto Benigni's works, films deploy slapstick and satirical tropes to expose cultural contradictions in postwar Europe. Likewise, the Indonesian and Malaysian comedies negotiate tradition and modernity through cultural signifiers embedded within their visual compositions.

In *Warkop DKI Reborn*, the revival of the iconic trio from 1980s Indonesian cinema – *Dono*, *Kasino*, and *Indro* – occurs in contemporary urban and bureaucratic settings. This intergenerational comic nostalgia resembles Italian commedia all'italiana, where characters caricature and critique modernization. The film uses mise-en-scène for visual realism and semiotic layering. Chaotic urban backdrops, garish police uniforms, and exaggerated domestic spaces symbolize a society positioned between its past and a neoliberal present. The slapstick humour, sometimes perceived as simplistic, reveals a deep satire of institutional inefficiency and generational disconnection. This reflects themes similar to those in films like *La Grande Bouffe* or *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, which use absurdity to dissect bourgeois values.

In *Susah Sinyal*, the duality of urban careerism and traditional familial roles is visualized through spatial dichotomies. Sleek office interiors in Jakarta contrast with the rustic beauty of Sumba's coastlines. This dualism echoes spatial tension in German *Heimatfilme*, where rural purity is juxtaposed with urban alienation. The story follows a single mother and her daughter, forced into emotional confrontation and reconciliation during a vacation without digital technology. A narrative of affective labour and cultural dislocation emerges, with themes similar to those explored in European melodrama and postcolonial cinema, where gender, space, and identity interact in unresolved contradictions.

*Hantu Kak Limah* operates in a different tonal register. It weaves supernatural folklore with comedic motifs. Set in a rural Malay village full of localized idioms and spectral imagery, the film blends horror and humour to deconstruct collective memory and superstition. The film channels the Gothic filtered through a postcolonial lens. In the works of Guillermo del Toro or George Romero, hauntings are symptomatic of unresolved historical trauma. Here, mise-en-scène functions as an ethnographic tableau. Traditional kampung houses, dim lantern lighting, and shadowy banana groves provide visual authenticity and mythic resonance.

The spectral “kak limah” becomes a cultural signifier and a manifestation of rural anxieties shaped by modernization and secularization.

*Polis Evo* and *Ola Bola* foreground multicultural narratives through action and sports genres. These underlying discourses resonate with ensemble films such as *Trainspotting* or *The Full Monty*. These films rearticulate working-class identity through stylized realism. *Polis Evo* uses fast-paced cinematography, urban landscapes, and a buddy-cop formula to explore ethnic diversity and institutional authority in Malaysia. Mise-en-scène features such as uniforms, city traffic, and tactical gear reflect procedural genre visual codes and sociocultural tensions in a pluralistic society.

*Ola Bola* presents a historical narrative focused on Malaysia’s 1980s football team. The film uses retro mise-en-scène such as period costumes, sepia-toned filters, and analogue broadcast aesthetics to evoke a romanticized national past. Its emphasis on team unity across ethnic lines reflects concerns in films like *Les Choristes* or *Bend It Like Beckham*. In these films, sports represent integration and aspiration. The film becomes a site of national myth-making, using nostalgia as an affective strategy and ideological tool.

These films reflect Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “third space” where hybrid identities negotiate meaning. Comedy becomes a mode of resistance and resilience. It enables audiences to respond to cultural tensions through laughter. Language plays a central role in these films. Puns, dialect switches, and code-switching create a polyphonic text in line with Bakhtinian dialogism. These elements resist singular cultural readings. According to Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory, each visual and linguistic sign within the mise-en-scène carries denotative and connotative meanings. These meanings shift depending on the viewer’s social position, national origin, or generational background.

European cinema has emphasized auteur theory and existential themes. Southeast Asian comedic films reveal a tradition rooted in collective authorship, folklore, and public pedagogy. Didacticism in these narratives includes themes of modern work ethics, traditional family expectations, supernatural belief, and rationalism. These films reflect cultural values through story and mise-en-scène, aligned with Henry Giroux’s theory of public pedagogy. Cinema in this context serves as a cultural text and a pedagogical intervention. It has the capacity to shape public consciousness and facilitate intercultural empathy.

The cinema of Malaysia and Indonesia uses comedy, mise-en-scène strategies, and linguistic hybridity to engage with global film traditions. It adapts cinematic devices with cultural specificity in semiotics, historical reference, and narrative ethos. This combination of global relevance and local depth positions “Serumpun” cinema as a significant contributor to world cinema and cross-cultural education.

## Conclusion

Within the context of Indonesian and Malaysian comedy films, examining comedic strategies arises as a dynamic framework that illuminates the intricate interplay of cultural dynamics within the cinematic setting. This study examines the strategic utilization of cross-border humour as a mechanism of enchantment, effectively navigating films across the complex landscape of cultural exchanges. The language humour developed in these films adds even more educational value to them as this element of the films surpasses cultural boundaries. As a common language of humour, it creates unanimity among viewers of different cultures.

In addition to the relatability within the education aspect of these films, they also add language humour allowing a cultural barrier bridging the audiences under the films to have a relatable experience. The cultural level is further enriched by the language humour of these films, which is above culture and allows for shared viewing entertainment for diverse audiences. This film's use of language as a didactic utility interrogates the ability of film to improve cultural understanding and interdependency, especially between nations that share a linguistic and cultural past, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. As is evidenced by the capacity of such films to speak about important but rather ambiguous themes such as multicultural challenges, traditional beliefs, as well as physical and cultural aspects of the modern world in an understandable and lively manner, film is one of the most suitable audiovisual mediums for the development of critical thinking and cultural empathy.

Equally important, the representation of characters and settings in such films provides viewers an avenue to gain insights into cultural identities and social values more profoundly. A film works as a non-formal audiovisual educational platform where viewers get involved emotionally and intellectually with the content. This engagement contributes to a better self-perception of one's culture. It encourages an understanding of other people and cultural practices to bring people together and promote a sense of unity for the human race. Therefore, Indonesia's Malaysian film that have similar culture reflects that movies can be a highly significant public pedagogy tool offering insight into cultural heritage, societal changes, and convergence of human relations. In a balanced mix of education and entertainment, these films contribute significantly to molding public opinion, establishing cultural notions, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. Thus, film can become proof of the living value of storytelling from an educative, meditative, and cultural cross-exchange point of view, i.e., of its usefulness in creating a more informed and broaden virtual world.

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