Exploring Collaborative Scriptwriting and Virtual Drama Performance: Enhancing English Language Education through Technology Integration

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Abstract
The present study elaborates on the process of collaborative scriptwriting for drama and the implementation of virtual platforms for theatrical performances. The qualitative design approach was used to provide a detailed explanation of how the virtual drama performance about The Spread of Islam in the 16th Century by Ratu Bagus Kuning was rehearsed and recorded. The subject of the study was 18 graduate school students who took the Appreciation and Literature Teaching course in a Graduate School of English Education at a state university in Indonesia. The data obtained from observation, interview, and documentation were analyzed by utilizing a thematic process. The result of the study reveals two main findings: it emphasizes innovative scriptwriting and video presentation in virtual educational drama, and it also shows the communication, cooperation, critical thinking, and creativity involved in writing drama scripts and performing virtually. The study highlights the process of collaborative drama script writing, focusing on Palembang's heroic tale

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of Ratu Bagus Kuning. Using the university's LMS for dialogues, research, and creative collaboration, students prepared for a virtual drama performance. They paired up to draft scenes, actively applying 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking and creativity. Peer feedback and revisions improved script quality. Despite continuity issues and technical constraints, students showed resilience and adaptability. Rehearsals and the final virtual performance demonstrated their dedication and innovation. The integration of technology and cultural sensitivity highlighted virtual drama's transformative potential, emphasizing communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

Keywords: Collaborative scriptwriting, creative exploration, critical thinking, educational innovation, virtual theatrical performances.

1. INTRODUCTION

One form of literature that contains the play of human life is written in the form of dialogue and staged into a drama (Dahlan, 2022; Fadillah et al., 2022; Nurhasanah & Hussin, 2022; Reis & Ashmore, 2022; Timpe-Laughlin et al., 2022). Drama performance is a collective work that involves a creative process. This collaboration aims to provide a decent spectacle for the audience (Cho, 2021). This is in line with Endraswara's (2011) thought that drama staging is a collective effort coordinated by a director and involving various theater professionals guiding actors and technical staff throughout the process.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted language learning, particularly in drama performance (Mohammed, 2023). One of the most notable effects of the pandemic on language learning in drama performance is the shift towards virtual platforms (Brewer, 2023; Karaosmanoğlu et al., 2022; Mokoena & Vuuren, 2023). Many drama classes and performances have moved online since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, necessitating adjustments in teaching methods and student engagement. This transition to virtual environments has both advantages and challenges.

On the positive side, virtual platforms have provided opportunities for language learners to engage in drama performances from the comfort of their own homes (Giebert, 2022). This accessibility has enabled participation from individuals who may not have been able to attend in-person classes due to location constraints or scheduling conflicts. Additionally, online platforms offer flexibility in scheduling and allow for asynchronous participation, accommodating learners with diverse schedules and time zones.

However, the virtual format also presents challenges for language learners in drama performance. The absence of face-to-face interaction and physical presence can diminish the immersive experience that is integral to language acquisition through drama. Dzardanova et al. (2023) state that non-verbal communication cues, such as body language and facial expressions, may be more difficult to interpret in virtual settings, impacting the depth of understanding and engagement in language learning activities. Moreover, the technological requirements for virtual drama performances may pose barriers for some learners, particularly those with limited access to a reliable

internet connection or necessary devices (Haerazi, 2024; Silviyanti et al., 2014). Technical issues such as audio/video lag, connectivity issues, and software compatibility issues can disrupt the flow of the learning process and detract from the overall experience.

In response to these challenges, educators and language learners have been exploring innovative approaches to adapt drama performance for virtual environments. This includes utilizing multimedia tools, interactive platforms, and digital storytelling techniques to enhance engagement and facilitate language learning outcomes. Collaborative projects, virtual rehearsals, and online performances provide opportunities for students to practice language skills in authentic contexts while fostering creativity and collaboration. Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, the integration of drama performance into language learning remains valuable and effective.

From this trend, the researchers conceived virtual drama performances, spawning textbooks, videos, and YouTube channels. Unlike recent work by Mark and Smith (2022) on drama streaming in Nigeria, prior studies (Gallagher et al., 2020; Schenker, 2020) exist, but research on virtual drama performances in English Language Teaching remains limited (Dahlan, 2022; Rogers et al., 2022; Sulistyorini, 2022; Widyahening & Sitoresmi, 2021). Dahlan (2022) explored similar aspects, like script and technology, but did not detail the tools used. This study observed virtual dramas on the YouTube channel, noting script use, camerawork, and settings. Literature gaps include virtual drama textbooks, the utilization of platforms like Google Meet or Zoom, and collaborative student-lecturer efforts to enhance communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Thus, this study aims to explore these areas qualitatively.

This qualitative study highlights a heroic story about *Ratu Bagus Kuning* (RBK) from Palembang to be both a drama script and a virtual drama. The choice to incorporate RBK into virtual drama scripts and performances emphasizes a commitment to preserving and promoting local cultural heritage while utilizing contemporary technological tools (Mendoza et al., 2023). This approach not only enriches the educational experience which necessitates innovative methods of instruction and engagement.

Based on the preceding discussion, the issue of this study is to address pressing concerns revolving around the utilization of RBK, a significant aspect of Palembang's local culture, for crafting virtual drama scripts and performances. This is driven by the need to respond effectively to the growing technological demands of 21st-century learning environments. Therefore, this recent study seeks to explore how each student can creatively write parts of a drama script based on the assigned content and perform the drama virtually.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Innovative Drama Script and Virtual Drama

Innovative drama script and virtual drama research draw from a variety of sources, including scholarly literature, empirical studies, and practical applications. Zakopoulos et al. (2023) investigate the effectiveness of virtual drama performance in

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educational contexts, examining its impact on learning outcomes, student engagement, and artistic expression. They explore theoretical frameworks that inform the design and implementation of virtual drama activities, drawing from disciplines such as theater studies, education, communication, and technology.

The theoretical contributions to virtual drama performance offer psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of digital storytelling and theatrical expression (Li et al., 2024). They analyze the affordances and constraints of virtual environments, considering factors such as presence, immersion, and interactivity in shaping audience experiences. Theoretical frameworks such as presence theory, social presence theory, and narrative theory inform the understanding of how virtual drama performances engage audiences and arouse emotional responses.

A critical evaluation of existing literature on virtual drama performance involves examining the strengths, limitations, and implications of theoretical and methodological approaches. Walzer (2024) queries the assumptions, biases, and cultural contexts underlying theoretical frameworks and research methodologies, identifying areas for refinement and future exploration. Moreover, he assesses the relevance of virtual drama performance research to the broader field of arts education, digital media studies, and cultural studies, considering its potential to enrich teaching and learning practices in diverse educational settings, especially in English Language Teaching (ELT).

Numerous studies highlight a body of research focusing on creative drama scripts and virtual drama performances. Forrier et al. (2018), Manit and Son (2022), Wongsa and Song (2022), Lewis et al. (2023), Manabe et al. (2023), and Dinham (2024) scrutinize the creative drama scripts. Their studies explore various aspects of how drama scripts are crafted and personalized for students to perform, potentially investigating elements like plot development, character dynamics, thematic content, and audience engagement. Similarly, Ermalati et al. (2023) study incorporates climate change and the *Pancasila* profile (the foundational philosophical theory of Indonesia) into virtual drama scripts. The result indicates that the students' enthusiasm for learning English increases, especially when technology is integrated. Moreover, these customized scripts are seen as a means to deepen students' understanding and consciousness regarding both climate change and the principles of Pancasila. Meanwhile, scholars like Reis and Ashmore (2022), Southgate (2022), and Michelle (2023) contribute to the field by researching virtual drama performances. They investigate the elements of performing drama in virtual environments, exploring factors such as technology integration, audience interaction, the effectiveness of conveying emotions and narratives through digital mediums, and the overall impact of virtual performances on both performers and audiences.

Virtual drama can be done live or pre-recorded through Zoom. This way requires students to record themselves performing specific parts or scenes assigned by the teacher (Dahlan, 2022). For instance, students can record themselves acting out the required scene while on a Google Meet then, those videos would be pieced together by the teacher for the entire class to watch. The other procedure for doing virtual drama is through live scenes (Liyanawatta et al., 2022). Teachers can create a breakout room and divide students into groups. From there, groups may practice scenes, perform individual work for one another, create their script, and run a short skit. In summary, the mentioned studies contribute to the understanding of how drama scripts are created and adapted for performance, as well as how virtual platforms are utilized to create

dramatic productions. They offer an understanding of the evolving drama education and performance in both traditional and digital contexts.

2.2 Technological Tools for Virtual Drama Performance

The use of Zoom in virtual drama performances has become an increasingly important topic in modern theatre research and practice (Chen, 2023; Inderawati et al., 2023). The integration of Zoom into virtual drama productions represents a significant shift in how theatre is conceptualized and executed in contemporary times. This phenomenon has drawn the attention of scholars and practitioners alike, who seek to understand its implications for performance art, audience engagement, and the creative process.

Not only does Zoom serve as a platform for virtual drama, but the Canva application also significantly enhances virtual performances by providing customizable settings. Zoom and Canva have two advantages for virtual drama purposes (Inderawati, 2022; Karaosmanoğlu et al., 2022). First of all, it is very easy to use for virtual drama; both of them only require an email registration to get into the application. Using the Zoom application for virtual drama also allows the user to gain audiences. This online platform enables them to share the link of the meeting with others by dropping it on their social media, and people only need to click on the link to join the virtual drama. The Canva application helps the user to create a poster of the drama to advertise it to many people by only registering the email.

Another advantage of Zoom and Canva applications in virtual drama is that digital sets give the audience, as the viewer of the drama and the creator, a different experience, which would not be given by a direct stage drama (Jdid et al., 2013). For the audience, watching drama through the Zoom application could give more intimate euphoria. This is very different from the condition the audience gets in a direct stage drama, where they cannot see the actors' facial expressions because of the distance between the stage and the seat. While using Canva gives the user the freedom to create a poster for the drama, they can design the poster based on their creativity and share it through their social media. Therefore, Zoom and Canva applications are not only easy to use for virtual drama but also give the user a different experience by using them.

2.3 The 21st Century Learning and Multi-Tasking in Virtual Drama

21st-century learning is a transition in learning where the developed curriculum leads schools to change their learning approach from teacher-centered to student-centered. This is following the demands of the future when students must have the skills to think and learn. These skills include problem-solving skills, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills (Bernhardt, 2015; Cretu, 2017).

In presenting the art of drama that students usually perform on stage, students must adapt to technology that allows characters to meet but not directly. This will indeed increase their 21st-century skills, namely communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Students must think creatively and critically to understand the meaning of literary works through a virtual stage. Irugalbandara (2021) in his study reports that students were creative and critical as they learned to perform drama. They needed to carefully adjust the setting, facial expressions, makeup, and drama properties.

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In creating virtual dramas in this 21st-century era, all students are required to multitask (Schmieder & Wierzbicki, 2012). They must not only craft compelling narratives and dialogue for scripts but also develop proficiency in writing. Furthermore, the shift to virtual platforms like Zoom for staging dramas necessitates additional skills from students. They must adapt to acting in front of a screen, which presents unique challenges compared to traditional stage performances. It pinpoints the importance of training actors to effectively engage with audiences through digital mediums.

However, it is important to recognize the potential drawbacks and limitations of virtual drama education. Bay-Cheng (2023) raises concerns about the loss of physical presence and spontaneity in virtual performances. She argues that the reliance on digital platforms may hinder actors' ability to fully embody their roles and connect with audiences authentically.

In summary, while the integration of writing skills and adaptation to virtual platforms are essential components of modern drama education, there are both benefits and challenges associated with these developments. As educators and practitioners navigate this evolving phenomenon, it is crucial to strike a balance between technology for creative expression and preserving the core principles of theatrical artistry.

3.   METHODS

The study employed a qualitative case study design, which explores the depth and complexity of human experiences, behaviors, and perceptions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe a case study as an investigative method used across various fields to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular event, action, or process. The study primarily focuses on two main aspects: drama script writing and virtual drama performances. These aspects are central to the English Education Study Program and are examined within the context of the broader educational setting. In this context, the qualitative case study design was employed to investigate the subjective meanings and interpretation of the *Ratu Bagus Kuning* (RBK) drama script writing and virtual drama performances in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia.

The participants of this study were 18 graduate students who enrolled in the Appreciation and Literature Teaching course. The decision to focus on students with experience in virtual drama performance preparation was to gather insights from individuals who had firsthand knowledge of the subject matter. By selecting students with this specific background, the researchers aimed to ensure that the data collected would be relevant and informative for the study objectives.

The data for the study were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Five observations were conducted during rehearsals 1 to 5 of the virtual drama. In the observation, the researcher looked into the students' actions, interactions, and performances captured in the video recording. For the interviews, the researchers prepared several questions about the difficulties encountered in writing the script and conducting the virtual drama, and the students' perspectives toward the multitasking activities. A semi-structured interview was conducted for about 30 minutes for each student. Then, the researchers conducted the interview sessions. Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth and complex information exploration.

With flexibility in questioning, the researchers explored the students' perspectives, experiences, and thoughts in more detail. This created a more relaxed and open environment, encouraging respondents to share information more honestly and openly. The last data collection method was documentation. Two documents were obtained: the drama script, which provided insights into the narrative and structure of the performance, and a video recording of the actual drama performance, offering a visual representation of the students' actions, interactions, and overall execution of the virtual drama. Most data collections were gathered online, such as through Zoom meetings, LINE video calls, and WhatsApp chat messenger.

The researchers employed triangulation to validate and ensure the accuracy of the results. Firstly, direct observation of scriptwriting and virtual drama performance provided insights into student collaboration and multitasking. Interviews with students deepened their understanding of their experiences and strategies. Documentation, including drama scripts and video recordings, offered concrete evidence of collaboration results. Triangulating data from these sources enabled comparisons, confirming findings and providing a comprehensive understanding of students' virtual drama experiences (Carter et al., 2014). This approach added validity to the research and strengthened conclusions.

In analyzing the data, the researchers applied the thematic process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began by 1) organizing the collected data, including observation notes, interview transcripts, and documentation (drama script and performance video), 2) applying coding techniques to categorize and label segments of data based on key themes, topics, or research questions, 3) reducing data by summarizing the data to identify patterns, trends, and significant findings, 4) conducting triangulation by comparing and cross-referencing data from multiple sources (observation, interviews, and documentation) to validate findings and enhance data reliability, 5) conducting a thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns within the data, and lastly, 6) the analyzed data were qualitatively interpreted to explore underlying meanings, implications, and insights.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Writing Collaborative Drama Script

The findings of the study reveal a careful process of collaborative drama script writing, emphasized by the exploration of Indonesian local culture through the lens of Palembang's heroic tales, particularly focusing on the narrative of *Ratu Bagus Kuning* (RBK). The study illuminates the intricate journey undertaken by students as they engage in dialogue, research, and creative collaboration facilitated by the university's Learning Management System (LMS) features. On the first meeting, through the collaborative platform of Big Blue Button (BBB), students probe into various versions of the RBK story, cautiously examining and analyzing paragraphs to distill the essence of the narrative. Guided by their lecturers and supplemented by relevant articles, the students conducted the challenging task of translating paragraphs into engaging dialogue and compelling scenes, cognizant of the unique demands of virtual performance.

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Table 1. Scenes division

Scenes	Description	PIC
1	The introduction of *Ratu Bagus Kuning* (RBK)	S1 & S2
2	The learning process of *Walisongo*	S3 & S4
3	Whisper to spread the religion	S5 & S6
4	Come to Palembang, fight with Sriwijaya kingdom members	S7, S8 & S9
5	The *Pendekar* lost so they became *Putri*'s followers	S10, S11 & S12
6	Come to Bagus Kuning, fight with the monkey demon	S13 & S14
7	The monkey lost and he and his follower became her Followers, too	S15 & S16
8	The end of RBK dying without any descendant, and the monkey protects her till now	S17 & S18

Note: PIC = Person in Charge, S= Student

Table 1 shows that the students were paired to collaboratively write the drama script. The students used the LMS to prepare a list of scenes as part of drafting the drama script. It emphasizes the active involvement of students in the creation of the script and the use of technology to facilitate their learning and collaboration. The students were urged to use 21st-century learning skills, i.e., critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. Even though the lecturer provided some files dealing with the RBK historic story in the LMS, the students still needed to search websites for information about RBK.

At the next meeting, the lecturers greeted the students in their WhatsApp group and informed them to have an asynchronous mode of learning to make the meeting flexible. They were asked to report their scenes to identify how they created the scenes assigned. The lecturers invited the students to post their scene draft and to ask their peers to comment on it. Following is the excerpt of Scene 1's first draft.

Excerpt 1: Scene 1 (first draft)

Scene 1

On a quiet night, in her room, Putri Mulya Syarifah Mahani is still awake and staring at the ceiling of her room which looks fragile. Then his father comes into her room, sits next to her, and asks her:

Syekh Zainal Abidin : "Why haven't you slept yet, dear?"
Putri Mulya : "Father, why did Grandpa have to move to Java? we are descendants of Sayyidina Ali, isn't life in Arabia better than here?"

With a little smile, he answers:

Syekh Zainal Abidin : "Dear, Grandpa moved to Java because he had to spread Islam in Java." *(with furrowed forehead, Putri Mulya asks again)*
Putri Mulya : "Why must Grandfather be the one who spread Islam?"
Syekh Zainal Abidin : "The obligation to spread Islam is not only for your Grandfather, but for all Muslims in this world, including me and you."
Putri Mulya : "Me, too? but I'm still a kid."

Syekh Zainal Abidin laughing:

Syekh Zainal Abidin : "Wkwkk, okay enough, let's sleep. Tomorrow we should wake up
for the prayer."
Putri Mulya   : "Alright, Father."

(Putri Mulya nods and goes to her bed)

The excerpt was not short; it spanned more than three pages for the first scene. This scene appeared to resemble that of a drama script intended for stage performance. Furthermore, the lecturers invited them to comment on the first draft, which was only a small part of Scene 1. The comments can be seen in the screenshots in Figure 1.
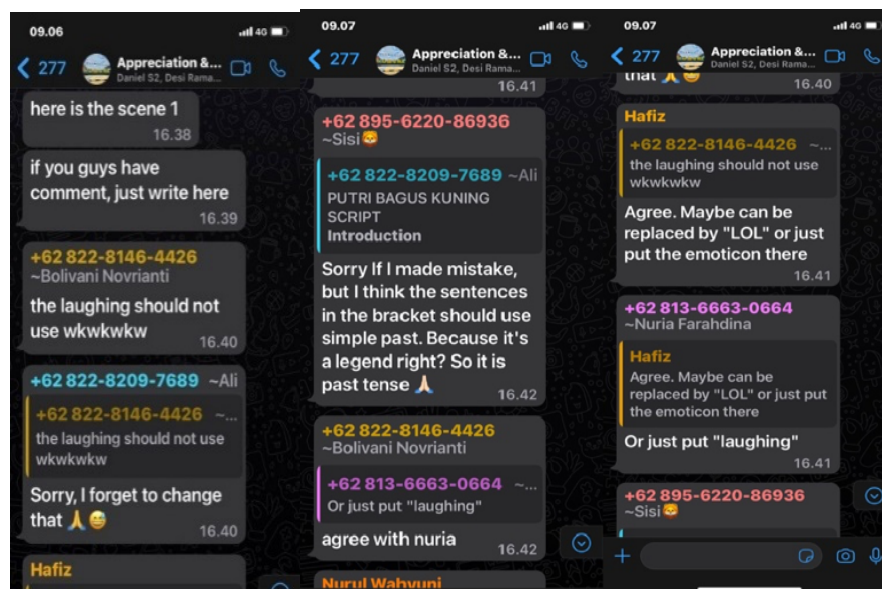

Figure 1. The discussion of Scene 1 draft with peers (source: the Authors, 2024).

Figure 1 displays the peers' comments on the first scene draft. They expressed amusement at the draft, indicating laughter with "Wkwkwkwk". They suggested symbolizing the laugh with "LOL" or an emoticon. Other feedback received from peers included adding narration before Scene 1 in the introduction and avoiding the use of brackets, instead incorporating the explanation directly into the sentence itself. Positive comments such as "nice opening part," "Yap… Great Nurul, agree," and "A nice intro, not too long to mention character by character but not too straight to the conflict too," were particularly encouraging for the group.

Additionally, the lecturers introduced them to websites containing copyright-free resources such as music, pictures, animal sounds, human sounds, and lighting for their performance. These websites provided students with the tools necessary to bring their virtual drama to life. After some time, the students uploaded their revised drama script draft to the application to demonstrate their progress. The websites played a crucial role in facilitating the creation of the virtual drama by providing a platform where students could enrich their script with multimedia elements, enhancing the overall production value.

As the students continued with their project, they took the opportunity to revise and enhance their drama script further. After spending time refining their script, making necessary revisions, and incorporating feedback, the students uploaded their

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updated draft of the drama script to the chosen application. This step not only stressed their efforts and progress but also demonstrated the improvements they had made to the script. By utilizing the websites and applications, the students bridged the gap between the written text of the drama script and its performance in a virtual environment, enriching their learning experience and practical application of creative writing and scriptwriting skills (Sinclair et al., 2006; Xu et al., 2011).

Below is another sample of a creative virtual drama script draft, serving as the foundational framework for the final virtual drama production.

Excerpt 2: The draft of the drama script was completed using websites

Play the sound "Cock Calling" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_i4ZuR4sni4)
Bedroom setting (https://www.canva.com/photos/search/poor-home/)

In the morning after Subuh prayer, Putri Mulya Syarifah wanted to meet with her Mother. She wanted to ask her mother about what she had already discussed last night with her father, whether is it possible for a woman can spread Islam.

Putri Mulya Syarifah: "Assalamualaikum. Good morning, what are you doing, Mom?"
Mother   : "Waalaikumsalam, Dear. I am making coffee for your Father, what has happened dear?"
Putri Mulya Syarifah: "I have something in my mind, Mom. Last night, Father and I were talking about spreading Islam, and I remembered that my Grandpa moved to Java for…"

From Excerpt 2, it can be seen that the student could write the scene well. The excerpt offers a glimpse into the student's proficiency in scriptwriting. Upon examination of the content, it becomes clear that the student successfully constructed a well-developed scene. This achievement is particularly noteworthy because, akin to traditional on-stage dramas, the script effectively captured the essential components that comprise a compelling narrative: characters, dialogues, and settings (Yang & Qin, 2024). Similar to on-stage drama, this script includes characters, dialogue, and setting. By achieving a balance between these elements, the student demonstrated an adept understanding of storytelling techniques. This skillful integration of characters, dialogues, and settings lays the foundation for coherent and engaging narrative settings (Yang & Qin, 2024). Moreover, it showed the student's ability to effectively convey character interactions, emotions, and plot developments within the confines of a script.

In the process of writing the virtual drama script, the students incorporated various elements such as sound effects and visual references from external sources, which can enhance the overall experience of the performance (Lee et al., 2023; Mendoza et al., 2023). The sound effects used, such as background music, ambient sounds, and character cues, bring the scenes to life with heightened auditory common sense, setting the mood and atmosphere, and adding depth to the storytelling, thus immersing the audience in the narrative environment. By stimulating multiple senses simultaneously, the audience becomes more actively involved in the narrative experience, developing a greater sense of immersion and emotional connection (Zhang & Peng, 2024). Likewise, the student's focus on scenes aligns with the role of schemas and scripts in pictorial narration, which are crucial as they provide the narrative structure for storytelling (Ranta, 2021).

Comparing the drama script written for performance on the stage, it is evident that in this current inquiry, the script was provided with the appropriate links to be

utilized in the virtual drama. In comparison to other studies where dramas were recorded together in a place and uploaded to platforms or channels (Widyahening & Sitoresmi, 2021), the mention of these other studies serves to contextualize the current approach within the broader prospect of similar research. These studies also involved drama performances but differed in their execution, emphasizing the uniqueness of the current inquiry's approach to virtual performances conducted from the students' homes.

4.2   Conducting Virtual Drama Performance

The selection of the title "The Spread of Islam in the 16th Century for the drama, Ratu Bagus Kuning," sets the theme for the students' virtual performance. When it comes to the choice of the title, it is worth highlighting that this title not only encapsulates the historical theme but also demonstrates the students' ability to contextualize the drama within a specific timeframe. This decision portrayed their research skills and their ability to explore historical events to provide a richer narrative backdrop. Additionally, the lecturers' guidance about avoiding immorality and racial stereotypes exemplifies the importance of cultural sensitivity and ethical considerations in artistic attempts. It is relevant to Dixon (2007) who suggests that theoretical advancements in virtual drama performance provide perspectives on the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of digital narrative and theatrical representation.

The subsequent discussion about costumes revealed the details involved in character portrayal. Notably, the decision by two students, initially assigned the roles of Christianity and Buddhism, to transform into Islam characters, demonstrated a level of personal engagement and commitment to the theme. This choice not only reflected their respect for the subject matter but also illustrated their willingness to step outside their comfort zones and embrace different perspectives.

As the students embarked on the rehearsal process, the virtual nature of the performance posed distinct challenges. Unlike traditional theatre, the virtual platform required adjustments that extended beyond acting. Positioning in front of laptops, adjusting to the camera's perspective, and synchronizing movements with virtual props demanded a new level of coordination and adaptation. This aspect of the rehearsal process highlighted the students' adaptability and the innovative ways in which they employed the digital medium to deliver an engaging performance (Hughes & Robertson, 2010).

The repeated rehearsals underscored the dedication and commitment of the students to refine their performance despite the difficulties inherent in virtual drama. It also shows their perseverance and their willingness to invest the necessary time and effort to perfect their roles. This diligence showed the students' understanding of the value of practice and the determination required to create a polished and cohesive performance (Inderawati, 2022; Inderawati et al., 2023).

The challenges and odd occurrences during rehearsals, as evidenced in the provided pictures, are reflective of the unique nature of virtual performance. These images may depict moments of technical glitches, misalignment, or unexpected visual effects that emerged due to the virtual setting. The visual representation of these challenges adds authenticity to the narrative, illustrating the challenges the students

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overcame as they adapted to a novel performance environment (Inderawati, 2022; Inderawati et al., 2023).

The students' journey in preparing for the virtual drama demonstrated their dedication, adaptability, and creative problem-solving skills. The conscious effort to maintain cultural sensitivity, the decision to adopt different roles, the meticulous attention to detail, and the persistence demonstrated throughout the rehearsal process are indicative of their commitment to excellence and their willingness to embrace the opportunities and challenges presented by the digital medium (Silviyanti et al., 2014; Inderawati, 2022; Inderawati et al., 2023; Haerazi, 2024;).

Figure 2 shows some screenshots of the students' virtual drama performance.
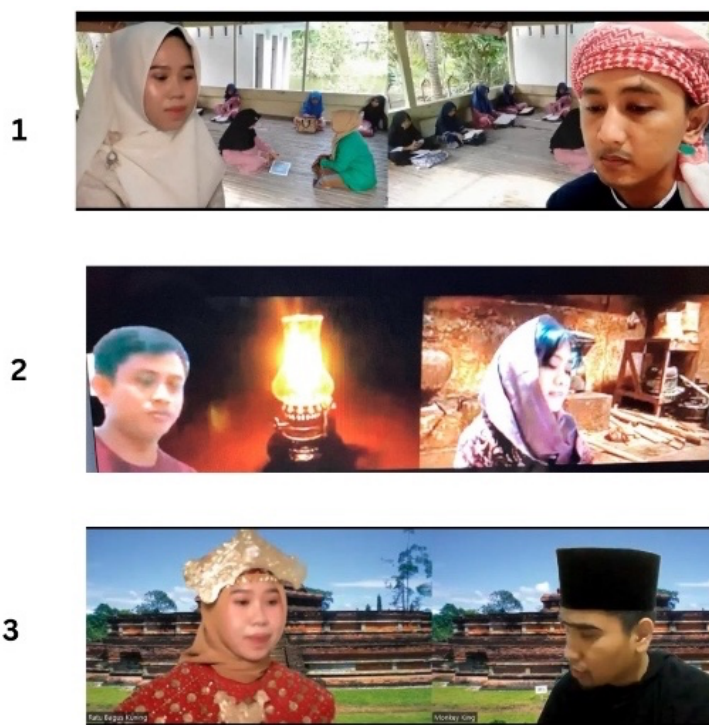

Figure 2. The screenshot of some acts (source: the Authors, 2024).

Observations of their virtual performances in Figure 2 revealed several key points. Firstly, it was noted that having two players on the screen was more appropriate than having three or more. Secondly, the proportions of objects and characters were carefully considered, with the lantern appearing larger than the player, and both characters (the father and the mother) occupying the same room, effectively utilizing different virtual settings to depict a room in a poor family. However, a minor inconsistency was observed where the father appeared smaller than the lantern. Lastly, the positions of the two players were accurately depicted, giving the impression that they were indeed in the same location. These observations portrayed the effectiveness of the virtual performances and provided valuable insights for future improvements.

After completing the rehearsal, the students forwarded the Zoom link to the lecturers to receive feedback and suggestions. Several constructive comments were provided, including observations such as one student, portraying the role of the *ustadz* (denotes a respected religious teacher or leader, commonly used in Islamic contexts), using a cellphone, resulting in a narrower screen and a visible gap between screens.

Additionally, it was noted that during scenes involving more than two players, not all participants were consistently visible on the same screen, with only one or two players appearing at times. These comments offered valuable insights into technical and visibility issues, guiding the students toward refining their virtual performances for improved presentation and coherence.
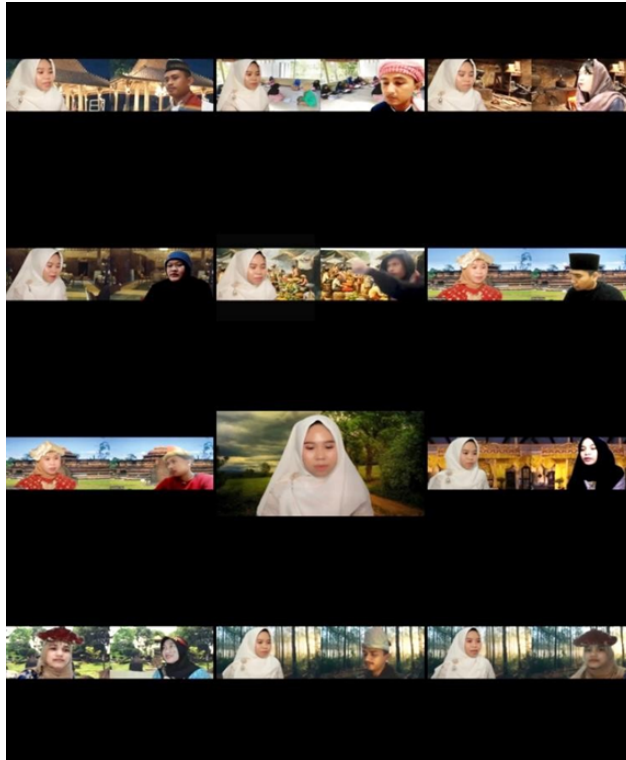

Figure 3. The captured pictures from a virtual drama video (source: the Authors, 2024).

After seven rehearsals, the students prepared to record their virtual drama with costumes and props. The final recording captured their best performance yet. Their performances had improved significantly. Figure 3 is some of the video captures. It depicts the scene from the students' final performance. The scene demonstrates the students' optimal performance on the virtual stage compared to their previous attempts. They were finally able to adjust their standing positions against the backdrop of the virtual stage, created using the Canva application.

4.3 Technology Integration, Challenging, and Multitasking Students

The importance of nurturing creative expression and collaboration using technology was conducted not without hurdles. The transition from physical to virtual performance presented a myriad of technical, logistical, and creative challenges. The following excerpts illustrate the difficulties students faced while performing the drama virtually.

(1) *I found some issues. Firstly, continuity. When we share the task of creating a script, each person develops their own scene. We try to ensure that the initial story remains coherent. Secondly, equipment. I faced challenges due to poor lighting at home and the lack of an HD camera.*

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> However, in the last recording, my friend suggested purchasing a ring light and an additional camera from the platform, and it made a significant difference. (S9)

(2) *Using the Zoom application isn't difficult, especially in university learning processes, particularly in language education, where it's common. However, one challenge when utilizing drama settings or backgrounds from Canva is the need for a green screen to ensure a neat installation. Sometimes, when using a background, faces may appear blurry so that only the background is visible.* (S6)

(3) *The first difficulty was in performing the fighting scene. It was difficult because the characters couldn't interact physically through virtual performance, making us have to punch, avoid, or drop the body precisely. Secondly, keeping the earphones and mic hidden was difficult while performing the virtual drama. The devices that were visible on the screen didn't fit with the costume which has the old empire theme.* (S13)

The first interview question highlights the challenges and experiences faced by the students in creating a virtual drama performance. The participants mentioned that despite facing numerous problems during the process, they were able to overcome them. One of the primary challenges highlighted was the issue of continuity in the storyline. Since different individuals were responsible for creating various scenes of the script, ensuring that the initial story remained coherent and related was a concern. This challenge highlights the importance of collaboration and effective communication among team members to ensure a good narrative flow (Bernhardt, 2015; Cretu, 2017; Tanrikulu, 2020; Hafour & Al-Rashidy).

The technological aspect of the virtual performance was also a significant barrier. Participants discussed the limitations of their devices, with one participant noting the lack of proper lighting at home and the absence of an HD camera. However, they were able to address this problem by incorporating solutions such as purchasing a ring light and an additional camera. This adaptation showed the students' resourcefulness and determination to enhance the quality of their virtual performance despite initial limitations (Zakopous et al, 2023).

Another aspect discussed was the use of the Zoom application, which was already familiar to the students due to its prevalence in university settings. However, they encountered challenges related to using a virtual background taken from Canva. The use of a green screen was required to ensure a neat installation of the background, but this presented challenges of its own. The participants mentioned that at times, the virtual background caused their faces to appear blurry, resulting in only the background being visible. This highlights the technical intricacies of virtual performances and the need for students to adapt and experiment with various tools and techniques (Chen, 2023; Inderawati et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the students highlighted difficulties in performing certain scenes virtually, particularly action-oriented ones like fighting scenes. Limited physical interaction in a virtual environment necessitated precise coordination for mimicking actions such as punches, dodges, and falls, emphasizing challenges in translating physical interactions into digital media. The students also mentioned challenges with integrating devices like earphones and microphones into their costumes while maintaining historical authenticity, presenting creative obstacles that required careful consideration.

This study yielded findings not found in previous research. Specifically, it highlighted problems related to virtual network failures affecting coordination in task preparation, direction, and execution, suggesting a novel approach to transferring

physical interactions to digital media. Additionally, challenges were encountered with integrating devices into historically themed costumes while preserving aesthetics, indicating a creative block requiring special attention. Lastly, the study emphasized limitations in physical interaction between characters in virtual environments, an aspect not widely explored in previous research, especially concerning action scenes and technology integration with historical costumes.

The students struggled with issues ranging from technological limitations and connectivity issues to the complexities of adapting dramatic elements for an online audience. Despite facing challenges, students showed resilience and resourcefulness while making the virtual drama. They worked together and tried new things in rehearsals, using digital tools to solve problems and learn. This journey was not just about technical skills but also about teamwork and creativity (Zakopoulos et al., 2023). It proved how art can bring people together, even online (Elsayary, 2023).

The next interview question concerns the challenges in virtual drama performance. A lot of activities were required to make the students be multitasking individuals with 21st-century skills. The following were the students' responses to the question.

(4) *In our drama project, we used different skills like talking well with others, working together, being creative, and thinking hard. We talked a lot to make sure everyone was in the right place and wearing the right things. We also worked together to mix all our scenes into one big story. This needed a lot of changes to make sure everything flowed smoothly. We had to be very creative to make our drama special and to write the story. We also did some searching to find out more about the Ratu Bagus Kuning legend because it was tricky to find good information.* (S14)

(5) *We're bringing our stage drama into the virtual world, which means we have to change how we do things. This challenge helps us learn important skills like talking well with others, being creative, working together, and thinking hard. We have to think creatively to figure out how to make our drama work online. This includes things like adjusting backgrounds, making characters look right, and changing scenes smoothly. It's a team effort to make a virtual drama happen, and that means good communication and teamwork are key to success.* (S3)

(6) *In this project, we relied a lot on 21st-century skills to get it done. Working together, talking things out, thinking hard, and being creative helped us solve every problem we faced. We talked a ton about the drama, songs, themes, pictures, scenes, and even how the characters should act. I hope we get more chances to work on projects like this in the future, so students can keep being creative.* (S12)

The responses show how 21st-century skills played a vital role in creating a virtual drama. The students recognized the project's complexity, which demanded them to be multitaskers with modern skills. Observations also revealed their ability to juggle tasks, like adapting to technology, working with peers, improving acting skills, and making creative choices. This multitasking mirrors a holistic education approach, where students are active participants, not just learners. It fits with the future's demands, where students need skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication (Bernhardt, 2015; Cretu, 2017; Blau, Shamir-Inbal, & Avdiel, 2020).

Communication was important in the virtual drama production, ensuring coordination in positioning, settings, and costumes. Collaborative skills were crucial too, as scenes were merged into a cohesive script. This collaboration led to adjustments for coherence, like modifying or removing scenes to maintain the narrative flow.

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Creative skills were essential, in adapting the legend of RBK and crafting the script. Critical thinking was used in researching and understanding the legend for accurate representation in the virtual drama (Rodriguez, Brown, & Vickery, 2020).

The shift from traditional stage drama to virtual platforms brought new challenges and opportunities for developing the 21st-century skills. Students recognized that technological adjustments enabled virtual interactions, emphasizing communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Creative tasks like adjusting backgrounds and mimicking expressions required critical and innovative thinking to overcome virtual limitations. Technology facilitated the application of these skills, with collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity integral to problem-solving throughout the project (Cretu, 2017; Irugalbandara, 2021). The students' experiences revealed the importance of collaborative problem-solving and 21st-century skill application in overcoming challenges. Overall, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity were pivotal in the success of the virtual drama project.

5.   CONCLUSION

The study highlights the careful process of collaborative drama script writing, focusing on Indonesian local culture through Palembang's heroic tales, particularly the narrative of *Ratu Bagus Kuning* (RBK). Through dialogues, research, and creative collaboration facilitated by the university's Learning Management System (LMS) features, students conducted their tasks to do the virtual drama performance. Pairing up to draft scenes and utilizing technology for script preparation underlined their active involvement and application of 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking and creativity. Peer feedback and revisions further enhanced script quality. Despite challenges like continuity issues and technical constraints, students persevered, showing resilience and adaptability. Rehearsals and the final virtual performance demonstrated their dedication and innovation in overcoming virtual limitations. The integration of technology and creative elements, guided by cultural sensitivity, emphasized the transformative potential of virtual drama, with communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

Nevertheless, there are limitations of this study; it includes the reliance on self-reported data from participants, which may introduce biases in the findings. Additionally, the study focused primarily on graduate students in one specific educational context, limiting the generalizability of the results to other populations or settings. Future studies could address these limitations by incorporating diverse participant samples and employing mixed methods approaches to gather more comprehensive data on the impact of virtual drama performances on learning outcomes and skill development

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