
Traditional Dance Training as An Effort to Introduce Indonesian Culture to Thai Students

Trisakti*, Setyo Yanuartuti, Raden Roro Maha Kalyana Mitta Anggoro

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: trisakti@unesa.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Traditional dance training activities for Thai students specifically aim to introduce Indonesian arts and culture on the international stage. This activity is motivated by the important role of relations between universities and society, especially people abroad. Community Service, which uses traditional dance as an object of training material, has an important role in an effort to preserve traditional or local culture, respect traditional values, and develop local cultural potential, especially in traditional arts. The dance training, which was attended by 12 (twelve) universities in Thailand with 166 training participants, was held at the Bangkok Indonesian School Sports Building in Thailand. The aim of traditional dance training is to introduce Indonesian culture to Thai students. Traditional dance training methods use demonstration and practice methods.

Keywords: cultural introduction; dance training; traditional arts

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a wealth of traditional dance arts that deserve to be introduced, developed, and preserved. Indonesian traditional dance, as an ancestral cultural heritage, is full of cultural values that can provide valuable experiences for the younger generation or society in general. Understanding and skills regarding traditional dance as a local culture of the community become part of community life to understand the values, history, and meaning contained in the local culture. Traditional dance contains noble values that are adhered to and must be respected by the people; thus, through art, the existence of a nation can be actualized.

Indonesia, as a multicultural nation, has a variety of arts and culture. Many arts grow and develop, both traditional and modern, this shows that Indonesian people really appreciate works of art. Apart from that, in Indonesian works of art, there are noble values that can be used as a guide for life, so for the Indonesian people, works of art also contain sacred values whose existence should be preserved. Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), where arts and culture is one of its superior products, strives to maintain and also increase the existence of arts and culture, in this case, traditional arts, not only at the national level but also at the international level. For this reason, the introduction of traditional

dance arts abroad is an effective effort to introduce the rich culture of the Indonesian nation.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia Bangkok has an Indonesia Culture Night (ICN) activity program, which is held every year. One of the activities in the ICN series is a traditional dance workshop with the theme of Indonesian traditional dance. The UNESA Community Service activity program also launched an International Community Service program, and a collaboration between the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok and the UNESA International Community Service Team emerged. Collaboration through traditional dance training activities is the focus of activities to build relationships between cultures and between nations (Doughty & Lindsley, 2016). Through traditional dance training, it is an opportunity to introduce traditional Indonesian culture. Learning traditional dance through training can be an effective and efficient gateway to understanding and, at the same time, experiencing the richness of Indonesian culture, which is interesting and unique in its arts and culture.

Thai society is known as a society that appreciates traditional dance arts. The traditional dance of Thai people is an integral part of the people's ancestral cultural heritage. The values contained in traditional dance continue to be maintained because they contain deep symbols and meanings related to history, beliefs, and cultural values themselves (Nettl, 2015). Likewise, the people of Thailand still use traditional dance as a ritual dance used in religious ceremonies. Based on the background above, traditional dance training is very appropriate to be carried out in Thailand by taking *Suramadu* dance material. The training participants are Thai students from the dance study program who already have a basic dance study. It is also very appropriate to introduce traditional dance arts to the younger generation, especially Thai students.

METHOD

The traditional dance training conducted in Thailand aimed to introduce Indonesian culture to Thai students, fostering cultural exchange and appreciation. The activity focused on teaching the *Suramadu* Dance, a traditional Indonesian dance that incorporates movement elements from two culturally rich regions—Surabaya and Madura. By featuring this dance, the program highlighted the diversity and vibrancy of Indonesian cultural heritage (Hughes-Freeland, 2008). The targeted participants for the training activity were Thai students enrolled in dance study programs across various universities. A total of 166 students from twelve universities participated in the program, demonstrating a strong interest in learning and engaging with traditional Indonesian arts. The twelve participating institutions included Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Chandrakasem Rajabhat University, Rajamangala University of Technology Krung Thep, Rajamangala University of Technology Phra Nakhon, Ramkhamhaeng University, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Kamphaeng Phet Rajabhat University, Suphanburi College of Dramatic Arts, Angthong College of Dramatic Arts, and Sukhothai College of Dramatic Arts.

This training activity was part of the Community Service Program organized by Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), specifically through its Center for Arts and Culture Excellence program,

in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Bangkok. This special event took place on September 15th, 2023, at the School Hall of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Bangkok, further emphasizing the cultural and diplomatic ties between the two nations.

The dance training was designed using both demonstration and practice methods to ensure a comprehensive and engaging learning experience (Joyce & Weil, 2014). The demonstration method has been proved particularly effective because it allowed participants to observe the dance movements directly from the trainers and demonstrators. Thai students could closely follow each movement, ensuring that any visible errors or missteps were corrected immediately, thus creating an interactive, enjoyable, and dynamic learning process. Following the demonstration phase, the training incorporated extensive practice sessions, reinforcing the student's understanding and mastery of the *Suramadu* dance. By repeating movements demonstrated earlier, the participants developed consistency and precision, which are critical to mastering traditional dances.

The combination of demonstration and practice methods not only accelerated the learning process but also provided a meaningful and immersive experience (Arends, 2012). The training succeeded in introducing Indonesian traditional arts and culture while strengthening the students' connection to performance arts. Overall, this activity played a significant role in promoting the importance of cultural understanding and appreciation while enhancing the student's skills in traditional dance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Training Activities

The participants in the traditional dance training are Thai students from the dance study program, so the participants already have the basics of dance. This provides reinforcement for dance training because the delivery of dance material will be accepted more quickly by training participants. To make it easier for training participants to learn the training material, a *Suramadu* dance tutorial video has been prepared which has been packaged in a short duration with the material delivered in English. The dance tutorial video was created because the training participants are Thai students who have basic dance movements that are different from Indonesian dance movements, especially the *Suramadu* dance movements, so with video tutorials, it is hoped that participants can learn dance more easily at any time. *Suramadu* Dance was chosen as traditional dance training material because this dance has its uniqueness and is full of local ethnic culture, which can be identified from the movements, musical accompaniment, and clothing used. The choice of *Suramadu* traditional dance material is an effort to preserve and develop Indonesian cultural arts abroad. Meanwhile, the aim of traditional dance training is to teach skills and knowledge about traditional dance to students in Thailand. In the training, participants learn about traditional art presentation techniques and processes. Apart from that, participants also learn the cultural values and philosophy contained in this traditional art (Cohen, 2013). Through traditional dance training, Thai students can get to know and understand more deeply about traditional dance in Indonesia

(Astuti, 2009). This activity can also be a medium for developing the talents and creativity of Thai students in the field of arts and culture, especially Indonesian arts and culture.

Suramadu Dance is a dance created by Diaztiarni which was created in 2009. *Suramadu* Dance is the title of a dance that is associated with a bridge connecting Java Island with Madura Island, the *Suramadu* Bridge, which can now be said to be an icon of East Java. This bridge can facilitate transportation, the economy, and all areas of life between communities in the two areas (Suryandari & Wibowo, 2012). The *Suramadu* Dance is a dance work resulting from a collaboration of music and dance movements from the Surabaya and Madura regions, which depicts the joy and enthusiasm with which the people of Surabaya and Madura welcome tourists visiting the area.



Figure 1. *Suramadu* Dance

The *Suramadu* dance training activities, which were attended by 166 Thai student participants, used 2 (two) methods, namely training with the demonstration method and the practice method. The demonstration method, according to Syah (2005), is a teaching method in which the teacher or trainer demonstrates the sequence of learning material processes. Sanjaya (2006) also explains that the demonstration method is a method of learning carried out by teachers by showing the learning process so that students can more easily accept learning material concretely. This understanding is also in line with the opinion of Daryanto (2009), who states that the demonstration method is a way of presenting learning material by demonstrating the lesson material in front of students. Likewise, the training carried out for students in Thailand used the demonstration method, namely, the trainer gave examples in front of the participants, and the participants imitated various *Suramadu* dance movements.



Figure 2. Trainee imitating dance moves from the teachers

The demonstration method in dance training is a very effective method because it involves the use of concrete examples of the *Suramadu* dance so that training participants can imitate and demonstrate the *Suramadu* dance movements well. The steps for implementing the training include several activities, namely:

Arranging the location of the trainees during dance practice so that all participants can clearly see what is being demonstrated

In the initial activities, this is very important because the dance practice material requires sufficient space to move freely. Place setting can be done by stretching out both hands and is done in four-facing directions. Participants were divided into two groups, namely, a group of female participants and a group of male participants. The groups were divided because the dance movements of women and men were different. Besides that, the tools needed for training must be well available. In carrying out the training at the Indonesian Embassy in Bangkok, the equipment needed was a loudspeaker to convey information about the dance techniques that the participants were following.

Conveying the training objectives and what will be achieved in the *Suramadu* dance training

Before the training begins, the lead trainer introduces the training team after which the trainer provides an introduction explaining the training objectives and training materials that will be trained on the training participants. The aim of the dance training in this activity is not only to improve the participants' skills but also to introduce the *Suramadu* dance as one of the traditional Indonesian dances to Thai students.

Implementing the demonstration method

The training was carried out by nine people consisting of three trainers (Trisakti, Setyo Yanuartuti, and Raden Roro Maha Kalyana Mitta Anggoro), a training director (Shaden) and assisted by five dance performers (Rina, Lintang, Adam, Matiin, and Jaya). The training technique is carried out by separating groups of men and women so that their faces meet in the middle. The training participants followed the instructions of a director, and in front of the group, three people were ready to demonstrate the *Suramadu* dance moves. The demonstration method is used to explain the *Suramadu* dance movements. After the participants clearly perform the *Suramadu* dance movements, they continue with the practice. In this training activity, students perform dance movements repeatedly so that the dance movements are mastered well.

Results of Activity Implementation

The results of the *Suramadu* traditional dance training activities went smoothly, and the expected goals were achieved by delivering the first movement to the completion of the last movement of the *Suramadu* dance. The training participants carried out movement after movement seriously and enthusiastically in receiving the material. During the training process, participants occasionally ask questions about dance

moves that are not clear, and with friendliness, the trainers and demonstrators answer questions and repeat dance moves that are not yet clear. The training participants felt comfortable with the training process because the trainers and demonstrators really mastered the *Suramadu* dance material. Even though the number of participants was quite large. Namely, 166 participants, the training techniques applied by the Community Service team were very professional. Trainers and demonstrators always accompany training participants and patiently answer participants' unclear questions.

The activities were carried out in a relatively large hall, making participants free to perform dance movements so that repetition of movements could be carried out freely and comfortably. The hall space, which can accommodate 166 training participants, allows for social experiences and opportunities to practice together comfortably. Through a spacious room, organizing training techniques is easier and more comfortable. Likewise, with the support of a good sound system, training can run well.

Based on the opinions of the training participants, judging from the results of the questionnaire given to the training participants in the form of a Google form, it shows that 93% of the participants have studied traditional dance outside of traditional Thai dance, while 7% of participants have never studied dance outside of traditional Thai dance. This shows that the training participants are students who are already familiar with traditional dances outside Thailand, so the participants' skills in dancing traditional dances are very good. 98% of the training participants really liked the traditional *Suramadu* dance presented in the training, while 2% did not like the traditional *Suramadu* dance. The results of the questionnaire regarding the attractiveness of Indonesian traditional dance to training participants are as follows.

Table 1. Percentage of Attraction of Indonesian Traditional Dance for Training Participants

| No | Option | Percentage |
|----|--|------------|
| 1. | Indonesian traditional dance involves interesting musical accompaniment. | 12.5% |
| 2. | Indonesian traditional dance involves healthy body movements. | 36% |
| 3. | Indonesian traditional dance teaches flexibility, discipline, emotional control and also expression. | 20% |
| 4. | Because of desires or interests from within oneself. | 12.5% |
| 5. | By studying Indonesian traditional dance, creativity will be honed. | 5% |
| 6. | The apparel and costumes worn in Indonesian traditional dance are very varied and interesting. | 3.5% |
| 7. | In the variety of Indonesian traditional dance movements, philosophical movements are reflected. | 3.5% |
| 8. | Nice | 7% |

The results of the training participant questionnaire showed that 12.5% of participants stated that the appeal of traditional Indonesian dance lay in its attractive musical accompaniment. The musical

accompaniment of traditional Indonesian dance is captivating and enchanting and can stimulate the enthusiasm of the audience and dancers. The sound of music enlivens the atmosphere and has beautiful rhythms, melodies, and harmonies. The musical accompaniment of traditional Indonesian dance can also move the audience's feelings, arouse emotions and make the audience enchanted by its beauty.

The appeal of traditional Indonesian dance lies in its movements which make the dance performer healthy. This was shown by 36% of participants stating that traditional Indonesian dance involved healthy body movements. The various types of dances and the uniqueness of traditional dance in Indonesia involve all body movements, including movements of the hands, feet, head, body, and other body parts. Through the involvement of body movements in traditional dance, it will help increase the body's muscle strength and this will have an impact on body health as well. Besides traditional dance being beneficial for body health, it is also a way to make artists happy so that it will also have an impact on health and mind, or in other words, it can make body and soul healthy.

Training participants are interested in traditional Indonesian dance because traditional Indonesian dance teaches flexibility, discipline, emotional control and expression. This opinion was expressed by 20% of dance training participants. Training participants understand the diversity of traditional dances in Indonesia, which are rich in meaning and uniqueness. In learning, flexibility, discipline, emotional control, and expression are found in traditional Indonesian art. In the field of flexibility, what the training participants understand is that it focuses on emphasizing body movements that are done in a flexible, soft, and flowing manner that expresses the beauty of dance movements.

Dance movements done well and precisely require discipline in moving. Through persistence and high concentration in practicing, the dance will be able to be performed well. Likewise, the dancer's emotional regulation needs to be arranged to be able to apply pressure to the dance movements according to the dancer's emotional control. To perform traditional dances well, it is necessary to express the dancer's expressions in accordance with the story or message displayed in the dance performance. The dancer's ability to convey messages in dance to the audience becomes a challenge for dancers in expressing their dance.

Learning traditional Indonesian dance for Thai students who are also from the dance study program, dancing makes students aware of the ancestral heritage that must be preserved (Wang, 2012). Awareness of wanting to take part in training from within was expressed by 17% of training participants. This was done because of the participants' awareness as well as their love for their ancestral cultural heritage and also their appreciation for local culture. Through the desire to take part in training activities from within to learn traditional dance, it becomes a strong motivation to make traditional dance an important part of the student's self which also becomes a form of personal expression for the student. Students' desire to learn traditional Indonesian dance is also due to developing creativity in the field of dancing skills. This was stated by 5% of participants. Through the creativity of traditional Indonesian dance, students will continue to hone their skills until one day, their skills will be even better at dancing. Thai student trainees were also interested in the clothing and costumes worn in traditional Indonesian

dance. As many as 3.5% of participants stated that traditional dance clothing was varied and interesting. By learning to dance traditional Indonesian dance, it is hoped that one day they will get the opportunity to be able to perform the dance and be able to wear the dance clothes.

Indonesian traditional dance teaches flexibility; 3.5% of training participants stated that it was also said that traditional Indonesian dance must be disciplined in its movements. Emotional control, or can be said to be an expression, also appears in traditional dance. The results of the questionnaire also found that 7% of training participants stated that the Indonesian traditional dance training was very good, and of course, this was a positive response, which reinforced that Thai students were very happy to have this dance training activity.

The *Suramadu* dance training was attended by 166 Thai students from 12 universities in Thailand. Training activities ran smoothly and well. To measure the achievement of activities and at the same time gather suggestions and input from participants, the Community Service team prepared an instrument in the form of a simple questionnaire created in Google Forms so that it is easy to use and effective. There are four questions in the Google form that participants must fill in, but before filling in, participants are asked to write their name, email, and university of origin. The four instruments that must be filled out by participants are questions about: 1) have you ever studied traditional dance outside of Thai cultural arts; 2) whether participants like traditional Indonesian dance; 3) what is the attraction of traditional Indonesian dance; and 4) provide impressions and suggestions for traditional dance training, especially as an effort to preserve national culture.

The results of the questionnaire analysis regarding whether or not participants had studied traditional dance other than Thai dance showed that 93% stated that they had studied traditional dance other than Thai traditional dance, while 7% stated that they had never studied traditional dance other than Thai traditional dance. This shows that the training participants are students who already have the basics of dancing, and they have even studied traditional dance outside of traditional Thai dance. Participants have high enthusiasm to be able to learn dance from other countries. Basically, the training participants really like traditional Indonesian dance. The openness and sophistication of technology make it easy for young generation participants to learn dance.

CONCLUSION

The 2023 International Community Service contributed to preserving East Java's culture by introducing Indonesian arts and traditions on the international stage. Traditional dance training for Thai students was successfully conducted and attended by 166 participants from 12 universities in Thailand, particularly from Art Study Programs. This program highlighted UNESA's branding as a center for excellence in arts and culture, showcased through training sessions and participation in the Indonesia Culture Night (ICN) on September 17th, 2023, at the Ganesha Theater, Siam Square One, Bangkok. During ICN, UNESA performed the *Citrolangenan Dance*, inspired by the *Panji* story and featuring masked performances that emphasize beauty, harmony, and Indonesia's cultural diversity. This

initiative also strengthened international collaboration between UNESA and Thai universities through the signing of an MoU. Such partnerships enable knowledge sharing, cultural exchange, and skill enhancement, enriching the global educational landscape while advancing the quality of the *Tridharma* of higher education.

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