

Directing My Life Fiction Film Using Mise En Scene Implementation to Realise Realism Style

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ABSTRACT

The fictional film *My life* tells the story of a young child forced to work due to economic hardship. Through this narrative, the filmmakers aim to convey an important lesson to the audience: children, especially those underage, should not be subjected to labour. The film adopts a Realist style of direction to enhance its portrayal, ensuring that the narrative feels as authentic and true to life as possible. The Realist approach focuses on presenting reality as it is, minimising artistic manipulation to maintain the integrity of the events depicted. This approach is reinforced by the *mise en scene*, a key element under the director's responsibility. *Mise en scene* encompasses all visual components within the frame, such as acting, costumes, settings, makeup, and the performance of the actors. Through this, *My life* serves as both an artistic piece and a social commentary, highlighting the harsh realities of child labour while urging reflection on societal issues. The film's direction emphasises realism by capturing the emotional and physical truths of the characters' experiences, making it a poignant portrayal of the struggles faced by underprivileged children in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Realist Style, Direction, My life Fiction Film, Mise en scene*

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INTRODUCTION

Film is an art and entertainment form that combines moving images, sound and narration to convey stories, ideas or emotions to an audience. As a multimedia work, film utilises various cinematic techniques, such as shooting, editing, lighting, and music, to create an immersive visual and emotional experience. Films can serve as a means to depict reality, express imagination, and criticise or reflect social and cultural conditions. In addition, film can also be an effective medium to educate, inspire, and influence the way people view the world. In Ariansah's journal, film is a series of photographic images projected onto a screen in a dark room. This definition is a simple explanation of the phenomenon of moving images that we see in cinema. (Ariansah, 2008).

Poverty is a situation where there is an inability to fulfil basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and health. (Yacoub, 2012) In his research states that poverty

is one of the most important problems because it covers basic human needs. Poverty can be caused by the scarcity of means of fulfilling basic needs, or the difficulty of access to education and employment. According to Soejono Soekanto, poverty can be defined as a condition in which a person is unable to maintain himself in accordance with the standard of living of the group and is also unable to utilize his mental and physical energy in a society (Putri & Nurwati, 2021) . Poverty is a global problem. Some people understand this term subjectively and comparatively, while others see it in moral and evaluative terms.

The high poverty rate is influenced by various factors, and of course the main factor is the economy. The impact of poverty makes some minors who are not supposed to work have to work to fulfil their basic needs. The weak economic level of some Indonesians and an environment that does not care about the condition of minors is very sad. Children who are not ready to work should be able to enjoy their education and play with their friends. However, due to economic demands, they must work.

The fictional film *My life* presents a story about a little boy who is forced to live with his grandmother, his father and mother are gone. The condition of a child having to live in the care of his grandmother and in a sick condition is a reality that often occurs in society. The reality is rarely contextualised in Indonesian films and the reality can also stimulate the birth of the idea that the story of the child deserves to be worked on in the concept of Realism where the visuals that will be created will describe the real conditions in Indonesian society.

METHOD

The process of creating a fictional film work has several stages that must be carried out as part of the method of creating a film work and in accordance with the work pattern or standard operational procedure (SOP) of the film which consists of four main stages, namely development. pre-production, production, and post-production (Syamsul Barry, 2024).

A. Development

The initial preparation for making a fictional film, Pengkarya first looks for ideas to be written into a script or screenplay that will be made into a film. I also observed several films that I would later use as references in the film that I would work on. The writer also designs what concepts and methods are suitable for use in this film. In addition, the author also sought some information from books or the internet to serve as references and as a source of bibliography.

B. Pre-Production

This stage is the initial process of all activities that will be carried out, or also known as the planning stage. In the pre-production process, all crews involved have prepared all the needs for the smooth process of the production as a whole, be it casting, reading, makeup tests, costume tests, or cam tests. (Darwanto Sastro Subroto, 1992)

1. Scenario interpretation

As a director, Pengkarya analysed the *My life* scenario so that the Realism style approach could be realised. After analysing the scenario, I made a Director Treatment that

I shared with division heads such as the director of photography, gaffer, editor, artistic stylist, and sound stylist.

2. Casting

Casting is done according to the needs of the scenario based on psychological compatibility (casting by type), acting skills (casting ability) and experience or according to profession, because the author uses the concept of mise en scene Realism, the characters in the film must be able to play according to the conditions of reality that exist in the script.

David Thomson (2002) in his book *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* mentions that casting by type plays a role in shaping an actor's identity in the eyes of the public. Many actors are recognised with a certain type of role, and casting by type ensures that the character can be easily accepted by the audience as they are already familiar with the actor's image. Casting by type is rooted in the public's perception of an actor's image and the preconceptions of who they are meant to portray on screen. (Thomson, 2002)

Pengkarya uses the casting to type method, which is to choose a physical performer based on the character in the script, then casting by ability, which is to find a performer who is able to carry the role well.

3. Reading

Reading here is more directed towards emphasising the character in the character. The writer as a director conducts a presentation acting method in the reading process to achieve natural acting. The reading process is important because it is in this process that the deepening of a character's character is achieved or not as a determinant of acting during the production process.

4. Location Hunting

At this stage, the author searches for locations that are suitable or similar to the depiction in the script, so as to realise the concept that the author will apply accurately, the author conducts location hunting with division heads such as director of photography, gaffer, editor, artistic stylist, and sound stylist.

C. Production

The effort to turn a script into an audio-visual form. Production is the process that most determines the success of a film. The process, which in other words is called shooting, is led by a director, the person most responsible for this process. (Darwanto Sastro Subroto, 1992) The film *My life* is led by the writer as the director. This production process is an application of what has been planned during pre-production where all crews strive to create scene recordings with all forms of concepts that have been determined, this is also inseparable from the initial planning during pre-production. The shooting is done by the cameraman in accordance with the concept and direction of the image stylist (Director Of Photography). Here a picture stylist is the one who transforms text into image language in accordance with the direction, point of view, emotion of the story, and participates in the technical design in the shooting process.

D. Post-production

Also called post-production, which is better known as the editing stage, is the final stage, namely the process of completion or refinement, of materials in the form of both

audiotapes and audiovisual tapes. At this stage, the results of the production that have been recorded previously are transferred into computer media to cut and connect images in accordance with the concept that has been designed and in accordance with the script that has been written by the scriptwriter. In this activity, there is someone in charge of the editing process, namely the editor. An editor will reconstruct the pieces of images taken by the cameraman. The editor is also fully responsible for the safety of all image and sound material submitted to him for editing purposes.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

THE RESULTS OF THE WORK

The fictional film *My life* uses the application of *mise en scene* to achieve the Realism style. Realism style is a way of making films that emphasises the principle of presenting reality as it is present the emphasis on the Realism style in the fictional film *My life* assisted by aspects of *mise en scene*

1. Setting

The fictional film *My life* takes place in several settings, including markets, houses, streets, and stalls. The setting in this film uses the concept of shoot on location, so that the locations used appear natural, not specially designed, and easily recognisable as in everyday life.

Here is the setting used in the fictional film *My life*:

a. Market setting



Market setting

Source: Ferli Muliato Pratama, 2024

b. Home setting

Rudi's house setting used in *My life* fiction film is a flat or rented house. The use of the location of the flat or rented house aims to show the social status of Rudi's character, namely as someone with a lower middle economy.



Exterior setting of the house

Source: Ferli Muliato Pratama, 2024



Figure 3. Interior setting of the house
Source: Ferli Muliato Pratama, 2024

c. Alley street setting

The use of the alleyway setting aims to illustrate that the story is set in the suburbs. The narrow, simple alleyways reflect the atmosphere of lower-middle-class life, while adding a realistic impression to the story.

This setting not only functions as a physical setting, but also as an element that supports the narrative and characterisation in the film. Life in the alley reflects the close-knit social dynamics, full of interactions between citizens, as well as the life challenges faced by the characters in the story.



Alley setting

Source: Ferli Muliato Pratama, 2024

d. Stall setting

The warung setting is used to illustrate that in every suburban settlement there is usually a warung that serves as a gathering place, including a place for children to play. The presence of this warung reflects the familiar and simple atmosphere of everyday life, as well as being an important element in building the setting of the story.



Figure 5. Stall setting

Source: Ferli Muliato Pratama, 2024

2. Costume and make-up

In the fictional film *My life*, the costumes and make-up were designed to reflect reality, without the addition of excessive make-up.

- a. The make-up used is natural face or natural make-up, so that the character looks more authentic and in accordance with everyday life. This approach aims to maintain a natural impression and support the story that focuses on the reality of life.



Figure 6. Make-up

Source: Ferli Mulianto Pratama, 2024

- b. The costumes used in the fictional film *My life* are designed to resemble clothes that are commonly worn in everyday life. This approach aims to create a realistic impression and strengthen the connection with real life. The following is an image of the costumes used in the fictional film *My life*.



Figure 7. Aisyah's grandmother's costume

Source: Ferli Mulianto Pratama, 2024

3. Lighting

Natural lighting is one of the important elements in the fictional film *My life*. This technique utilises natural light sources, such as sunlight or available light, without going against the logic of indoor or outdoor lighting. This approach aims to create an authentic atmosphere and support the film's narrative.

Despite the use of natural lighting, additional lighting was added where necessary to increase exposure. This process involves adjusting the angle, colour, and identity of the light to keep it consistent with the original atmosphere that one wants to portray. As such, lighting is not only a technical element, but also supports the aesthetics and atmosphere of the story.

In addition, the film also uses a high key lighting technique. This technique is designed to create a thin border between dark and light areas, focusing on colours, shapes, and bold lines in the mise en scene elements. High key lighting helps to emphasise visual details, so that every element in the frame looks clear and balanced, without losing the natural feel that characterises the film.

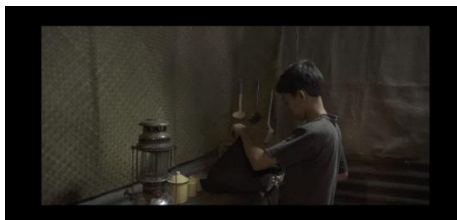


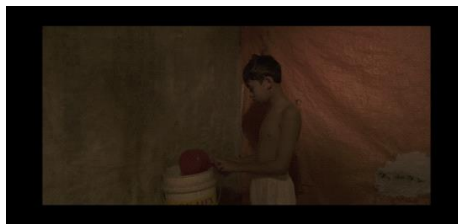
Figure 8. Lighting

Source: Ferli Mulianto Pratama, 2024

4. Real actor movement

The realistic style and acting in the fictional film *My life* uses naturally selected non-professional actors. This selection is based on their suitability for the characters, both in terms of physical appearance and the parallels between their roles and real life. This approach aims to create authentic acting and support the film's narrative.

As a director, I applied a presentation acting technique with an emphasis on expression. This technique is designed to help actors convey emotions and nuances that match the film's style of realism. By doing so, this style of acting not only strengthens the connection between the characters and the audience, but also enhances the overall quality of the storytelling.



Rudi's expression

Source: Ferli Mulianto pratama, 2024

DISCUSSION

As the director of the fictional film *My life*, Pengkarya uses the application of mise en scene aspects to realise the Realism style. Mise en scene, which refers to all visual elements arranged in a scene, plays an important role in creating an atmosphere that resembles reality. In the context of *My life*, the application of realism-oriented mise en scene aims to produce a film that feels natural and reflects the reality of real life.

Realism in film often prioritises accurate and unexaggerated representations of everyday life. This is reflected in the use of realistic visual elements, such as location selection, lighting, costumes, and camera movements that tend to be simple and unobtrusive. All these elements work together to create the illusion of a real world for the audience, as if they were witnessing real life.

The following is an analysis of some aspects of mise en scene applied in the film *My life*:

A. Setting

To realise the realist style in the fictional film *My life*, the author chose to use the shot on location technique. This technique refers to film production that takes place in real locations, not in studios or artificially created sets. Filming on location in documentary cinema provides a direct connection between the subjects of the film and the environments they inhabit, thus enhancing the authenticity and emotional impact of the narrative. (MacDonald, 2000). The use of shots on location provides a strong realist effect, where the audience can feel close to the world shown in the film. It also allows the audience to believe

that the story being told is indeed happening in the real world, not a made-up fictional world.

The film *My life* has various location settings that support the atmosphere of realism, including a house, a market, an alleyway, and a shop. Each location was carefully chosen to depict aspects of daily life that fit the characters and storyline.

One setting that attracts attention is the alleyway used in this film. The alley setting has the purpose of providing information to the audience that the setting of the story is in an urban area. The narrow and dense alleyway depicts an urban area with a life full of dynamics and simplicity, in accordance with the theme of realism to be conveyed.

The setting of Rudi's house, one of the main characters in the film, also has a deep meaning. The house used is a type of flat or rented house, which visually reflects the character's social status. The use of this flat or rented house shows that Rudi comes from the lower-middle economic class, with a limited but realistic life. The house, both in terms of exterior and interior, depicts the character's economic condition living in a densely populated urban environment.

The use of almost all parts of the house, both exterior and interior, adds depth in describing the character's life. The exterior of the flat, which looks simple and not luxurious, and the interior, which is cramped and lacking in decorations, reinforce the narrative that Rudi's life is far from luxurious. The setting of this house is not only a place to live, but also a social and emotional reflection of the characters who live in it.

With the right selection of settings and the use of shot on location techniques, *My Life* successfully creates a world that feels very real and depicts everyday life honestly. The locations are not only used as a setting, but also as a tool to deepen characterisation and support the overall storyline.

B. Costume and makeup analysis

In the fictional film *My Life*, the use of costumes and make-up is done meticulously, aiming to create a realistic and natural impression. Both the costumes and make-up in the film are designed to reflect everyday life, without the addition of elements that are exaggerated or not in line with reality.

The make-up in the film *My life* uses a natural face or natural make-up technique, where the make-up used is very minimal. The choice of natural make-up strongly supports the goal of depicting real life, without any sense of luxury or artificiality that is often seen in commercial films. By doing so, the characters look like ordinary people living in everyday situations, which also reinforces the sense of realism.

In addition, the selection of costumes in this film is very supportive of achieving a realist impression. The costumes used are clothes that are commonly worn in everyday life, such as casual clothes that are comfortable and suitable for each character's activities. There are no costumes that are too flashy or excessive, but simple clothes that reflect the social status of the characters. This costume selection is very appropriate, because it is able to show the reality of community life with all its dynamics and simplicity.

This overall approach in terms of both make-up and costumes was instrumental in supporting the film's aim to portray real life authentically. The use of natural make-up and

everyday costumes succeeded in creating a world where the audience could feel as if they were witnessing a story that really happened in real life, not a fictional construct.

C. Lighting

In the film *My life*, the use of available light technique becomes one of the important elements in creating lighting that is close to real life. Available light is light that is naturally available in the surrounding environment. Available light includes sunlight, moonlight, and lights at night. The use of available light aims to create a natural lighting effect, in accordance with real conditions, without adding or changing the light excessively.

David M. Berenstein (2005) in his book *Lighting for Film and Television* argues that the available light technique provides great advantages in terms of authenticity and atmosphere creation. According to him, using light that already exists on location not only gives a natural feel but also speeds up the production process as there is no need for complicated lighting setups. However, this technique requires the cinematographer's skill to utilise natural light effectively and to overcome obstacles such as weather or time changes. Using available light often brings an authentic feel to the scene, capturing the natural ambiance of the location and reducing the need for artificial lighting setups. However, it requires a skilled cinematographer to adapt to the changing light conditions and to control the exposure levels. (Berenstein, 2005)

Through this technique, the light is adjusted to the conditions existing on the set at the time of shooting. For example, in outdoor scenes, the lighting relies more on the natural sunlight shining on the location. On the other hand, in indoor scenes, the lighting uses house lights or other light sources present in the place, without any excessive additional lighting. This allows the film to retain the authenticity of the atmosphere that matches the reality of everyday life.

This available light technique aims to display light in the most realistic way possible, where the lighting used reflects the natural conditions of the time and place. It is not forced or manipulated, thus creating a more honest and accurate atmosphere, and giving the audience a more immersive and real-feeling viewing experience.

The use of available light techniques in the film *My life* is very supportive of achieving a strong realist impression. By not relying on artificial or forced lighting, the film manages to present a world that feels close to real life. The light used creates an atmosphere that truly reflects real-world conditions, be it in enclosed or open spaces, in a very natural and authentic way.

D. Real actor movement

The movement of the actors is done with an approach that prioritises naturalness and simplicity. The film uses non-professional actors who play an important role in creating a realist impression. The actor must search for the emotional truth within themselves and live the life of the character they play. (Stanislavski, 1936) The author applies realist acting techniques, where actors are expected to cultivate their expressions and movements to look like people in everyday life. In general, acting in films always uses a realist acting approach, because films always represent life in a real way. (Novianto, 2010) In this context,

the acting is not exaggerated or theatrical, but rather prioritises simplicity and emotional depth in accordance with the situation faced by the characters in the story.

This realist acting technique aims to make the audience feel close to the characters in the film. Each actor's movements and expressions are designed to reflect natural human reactions, so that the audience feels like they are watching real life, not a dramatic performance on the big screen. Acting that is not exaggerated and appropriate to the context of the story is the main key in achieving this impression.

However, although realist acting techniques are used, the actors' acting in the fictional film *My life* is still not fully achieved. One of the factors that influence this is the actors' reading process that has not been maximised. Less than optimal reading resulted in the actors not being able to fully inhabit their roles deeply, so the expressions and movements they displayed sometimes still felt unnatural and seemed stiff. A more intensive reading process and more in-depth rehearsals may be needed to ensure that each actor can perform their roles more authentically and in accordance with the characters they portray.

Thus, although the use of realist acting techniques in the film *My life* aims to create emotional closeness between the audience and the characters, achieving more optimal acting still requires improvement in the actors' rehearsal and preparation process. This will greatly affect the overall quality of the film in depicting everyday life more accurately and touchingly.

CONCLUSION

Poverty is one of the major problems that affect the quality of life of many individuals, including in Indonesia. This is evident in the fictional film *My life*, which depicts the life of a child forced to live in economic hardship with his grandmother. The film addresses the reality of poverty by depicting life very close to reality, relying on the principles of Realism in cinema.

In the process of making the film *My life*, the effective application of mise en scene greatly supports the achievement of the realism style. Various visual elements, such as the setting (location), costumes, makeup, lighting, and actors' movements, were carefully arranged to create an authentic and realistic atmosphere. The choice of locations that are appropriate to the theme of daily life, such as markets, rented houses, and alleyways, show the socio-economic conditions of the lower middle class. In addition, the use of simple costumes and natural makeup further strengthens the real impression conveyed in this film.

With this realistic approach, the film succeeds in presenting an evocative story, inviting the audience to better understand a life filled with challenges, especially for children trapped in poverty. The application of the Realism technique in the making of *My life* successfully brings the audience to experience a realistic life, without excessive dramatisation, and shows the importance of applying human values in every aspect of life.

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