



Faculty of Language and Communication

**MALAY CULTURAL VALUES IN MALAYSIAN ANIMATION:
A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS**

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Bachelor of Arts (Linguistics) with Honours

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**MALAY CULTURAL VALUES IN MALAYSIAN ANIMATION:
A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS**

by

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This final year project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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ABSTRACT

MALAY CULTURAL VALUES IN MALAYSIAN ANIMATION: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS

Nur Afifah Atirah binti Saperi

Animation has evolved into an aesthetic object that plays a significant role to transmit messages and information, with its distinctive advantages and great impacts on people's daily lives. In this new era, Malaysian animation is en route towards becoming a global phenomenon in the animation industry as it is capable to compete against influential animation worldwide. It is notable that Malaysian animation has won audiences hearts, with its unique representation of local values, especially Malay cultural values. As many researchers have been conducted Malay cultural values in animation based on its types, non-material culture or intangible objects is not prevalently used to describe Malay cultural values. To emphasize, no full attention is given too on how Malay cultural values are portrayed with related visuals that are simultaneously exhibited with dialogues in the animation. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the portrayal of Malay cultural values in Malaysian animation using the multimodal analysis approach, by focusing on the types of Malay cultural values, how these types of Malay cultural values are portrayed in Malaysian animation, including the extent to which Malaysian animation functions as a 'culture broker' based on the Malay cultural values that it portrays. This study employs Katan theory (cultural items classification), Lim Kim Hui theory (Molecurization of *Budi*), Awang, Maros and Ibrahim theory (other Malay values) for qualitative content analysis, as well as quantitative analysis, including Kress and van Leeuwen metafunctional framework for multimodal analysis to analyze 40 texts and 255 visuals from *Upin & Ipin: The Lone Gibbon Kris* film. The findings show that there are many types of Malay cultural values in terms of material and non-material cultures, and the visuals are portrayed concurrently with the dialogues in the animation in certain ways. In addition, the results have contributed to the evaluation of animation potentiality to function as a culture broker. Hence, it is concluded that the animation which can be a culture broker, can be addressed by future researchers to find out further whether the latter can function in actuality or vice versa.

Keywords: Malay cultural values, animation, multimodal analysis, Malaysia, culture broker

ABSTRAK

NILAI BUDAYA MELAYU DALAM ANIMASI MALAYSIA: ANALISIS MULTIMODAL

Nur Afifah Atirah binti Saperi

*Animasi telah berkembang menjadi satu objek estetik yang memainkan peranan penting dalam menyampaikan mesej dan maklumat, yakni mengandungi kelebihannya tersendiri. Pada era baharu ini, animasi Malaysia berada di landasan untuk menjadi satu fenomena global dalam industri animasi disebabkan keupayaannya berjaya menandingi animasi berpengaruh dunia. Ia membuktikan bahawa animasi Malaysia berjaya menawan hati ramai penonton, yang disertai keunikan persembahan nilai tempatan, terutamanya nilai budaya Melayu. Walaupun ramai pengkaji lepas menjalankan banyak kajian terhadap nilai budaya Melayu dalam animasi berdasarkan jenis-jenisnya, namun budaya bukan material atau objek tidak ketara tidak dikaji secukupnya. Malah, tiada perhatian sepenuhnya diberikan terhadap bagaimana nilai budaya Melayu digambarkan menerusi kesepadanan visual dengan penggunaan dialog dalam animasi. Maka, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji gambaran nilai budaya Melayu dalam animasi Malaysia menerusi pendekatan analisis multimodal, yakni berfokuskan kepada jenis-jenis nilai budaya Melayu, bagaimana jenis-jenis nilai budaya Melayu ini digambarkan dalam animasi Malaysia, serta sejauh mana animasi Malaysia berfungsi sebagai 'culture broker'. Kajian ini menggunakan teori Katan (klasifikasi item budaya), teori Lim Kim Hui (Molecurization of Budi), teori Awang, Maros dan Ibrahim (nilai Melayu lain) untuk analisis kandungan kualitatif, termasuklah kerangka analisis metafungsi Kress dan van Leeuwen untuk analisis multimodal bagi menganalisis 40 teks dan 255 visual daripada filem *Upin & Ipin: Keris Siamang Tunggal*. Hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa jenis nilai budaya Melayu dari segi budaya material dan bukan material, serta visual budaya adalah digambarkan secara serentak dengan dialog dalam animasi dengan cara tertentu. Dapatan tersebut juga telah menyumbang ke arah penilaian terhadap potensi animasi sebagai 'culture broker'. Oleh itu, ia dapat disimpulkan bahawa animasi yang boleh menjadi 'culture broker' boleh dikaji oleh pengkaji lain untuk mengetahui dengan lebih lanjut sama ada ia berfungsi secara realiti atau sebaliknya.*

Kata Kunci: nilai budaya Melayu, animasi, analisis multimodal, Malaysia, culture broker

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Pisang emas dibawa belayar,

Masak sebiji di atas peti,

Hutang emas boleh dibayar,

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IP	Interactive Participant
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
RP	Represented Participant
RO	Research Objective
RQ	Research Question

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter comprises the background of the study, problem statement, research aim, research objectives, research questions, followed by an operational definition of terms and significance of the study. Finally, it will provide a summary for this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Malays are one of Southeast Asia's major indigenous people, living in the Malay Archipelago, a largely Malay-populated territory (Kamaruddin & Kamarulzaman, 2009). Malay people can be found in Indonesia, Brunei, the Southern Philippines, Singapore, Southern Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, including in South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Western Australia as minorities (Shellabear, 1977). Asmah Omar (1983) contends the Malay world is also known and accepted as *Nusantara*, a term used by Malaysian and Indonesian intellectuals in referring to the territory inhabited by Malays who speak Malay as their primary language. The term "Malay" is constitutionally defined in Malaysia as a race with three distinct characteristics: Islam as a religion, Malay language as the main communication medium, and Malay culture as a lifestyle. Islam, which has had a considerable impact on the formation of Malay culture, is a crucial element of Malay cultural identity (Kamaruddin & Kamarulzaman, 2009).

According to Isa et al. (2019), the cultural system has a great impact on how Malays interact with each other and the communities. Wan Husin and Ong (2013, as cited in Isa et al., 2019) further assert that when the Malays interact with other communities and among themselves, the Malays are courteous and warm-hearted. The Malays' humble demeanour and sensibility are augmented by the Malay World's strategic geographical location. This is due to the land that afforded them with sufficient provisions to prevent starvation, as it is endowed

with a good climate and is well-safeguarded from natural disasters. Additionally, the Malays are exceptionally fortunate because they have never been subjected to any acts of cruelty by their kings or rulers. As a result of these factors, the Malay community has developed a culture of tolerance and respect (Wan Husin & Ong, 2013, as cited in Isa et al., 2019).

Merriam and Mohamad (2000) define “cultural values” as “emotion-laden, internalized assumptions, beliefs, or standards that shape how we interpret our life experiences” (p. 46). While acknowledging Malay cultural values, Hall and Hall (1990, as cited in Abd Mubin & Yaacob, 2018) distinguish two divisions of elements, specifically material culture and non-material culture. Material culture is related to the things that can be seen and touched in a physical form whilst non-material culture refers to the abstract thoughts and works that are not manifested in physical objects. To clarify, material culture of the Malays can be expressed through their traditional garments, cuisine, traditional weapons, iconic figures, and architecture, for instance, that are visible, as the underlying cultural meanings are concealed and could only be deciphered by the insiders. On the other hand, non-material culture is simply stated based on the attitudes and behaviours of the Malays. In this case, the Malay community places high importance on language politeness by means of each word having its own meaning (Azman et al., 2020). To maintain the value system, some notions in Malay daily life, such as shame, self-worth, dignity, and decency must be accentuated (Kadir, 2000), by reason of the Malay personality is directed with the association of talents, ways of communication and behaviour that emphasize the person’s modesty (Wan Husin, 2011). Therefore, the speaker’s language can be used to evaluate and interpret the personality of a person (Osman, 1975).

In addition, such values aforesaid are not only practised by the Malaysian Malay society in reality but also are expressed through various mediums including animation, particularly those produced locally. Some examples pertaining to Malaysian animation, especially in the

form of animated series such as *Upin & Ipin*, *Pada Zaman Dahulu*, *Puteri*, *Bola Kampung* and *The Adventure of Awang Khenit*. Specifically, Abdullah (2018) expresses the view regarding the storytelling basis of the two-dimensional (2D) animated series, *The Adventure of Awang Khenit* that has been broadcasted since 2015 is adapted from the text of a Malay folktale, *Awang Khenit* containing a sense of humour. The animation has elevated Malay values by careful application. To illustrate, the designs of Malay traditional attires for each character are meticulously produced, which highlights the producer's expertise for acquiring the knowledge comprehensively before creating the animation because this stage is often overlooked by most animation productions in Malaysia. The producer is proactively extracting the Malay folktale in the old Malay manuscripts as people take no notice of it. The result can be seen in the success of this animated series that has been recognized widely in Singapore and Indonesia (Abdullah, 2018). Thus, the Malay cultural values are being utilized with meticulous implementation in local animation to expose the culture among audiences productively because of the animation effectiveness in spreading messages towards people from different countries.

Muliyadi (2001) asserts the significance of incorporating local culture into Malaysian animation. It is crucial to construct a cultural representation that can aid comprehension of different cultures and nations, which is frequently mediated by what viewers acquire through visual information (Mitra, 1999). Pertaining to the quality of animation, Yasa (2019) expresses the view that the animation itself is a form of cultural preservation. The existence of animation media is one of the options for introducing a place or a larger area's culture. Through animation, the audiences can learn the variety of cultures without having to travel over the country to spot traditional attractions because animation has the ability to promote a culture across the globe (Yasa, 2019). Apart from this, Hassan (2007) states that animation should be regarded as a business that promotes local stories to local audiences because local society will become local

culture consumers. To a significant extent, the animation production can be expanded not only for the local society but also through the lens of foreign audiences. As mentioned by The Malaysian Reserve (2021), RM30 million Investment Loan Matching Scheme will be allocated by the government to fund the National Animation Platform initiative, which seeks to encourage more local animation in the international arena. Proof of this, Animasia Studio, a Malaysian animation, and digital content production firm, has signed a deal with Rainshine Entertainment, an international entertainment company, to make an animated film based on the *Young Captain Nemo* trilogy of books. The production of the *Young Captain Nemo* animation film will involve around 100 Malaysians. In addition, Animasia had converted the comic book, *Supa Strikas* into an animation series that drew over a million viewers from Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America a decade ago (Omar, 2021). Besides, Malaysian-made Cartoon Network animation series 'Mechamoto' by Animonsta Studios showcases Malaysian elements comprising Malacca City, the mythical Kota Hilir with its canals, lovely little alleyways, and diversified community, in which will be tuning in from over Asia, Australia and New Zealand, including dubbing into 12 languages (Chalil, 2021). As demonstrated above, it is important to realize the animation advantages and its high potentiality to expand local culture representation especially Malay cultural values, interior and beyond Malaysia's borders. The animation and Malay cultural values are the two correlated elements that need to be justified and clarified further as to why and how both elements are associated including the necessity to promote them.

As composed of different complicated sets of signs and symbols, animation can be considered as part of a wider cultural sector (Abd Mubin & Yaacob, 2018). Abdullah et al. (2020) express the view that visuals are effective for sharing a concept or message. The multimodality of animation is related to its efficacy as a vehicle for transmitting information, disseminating ideas, and offering entertainment due to images, behaviours, writings, and other

semiotic resources that are referred to as “modes” in a multimodal approach, are focalized to convey meaning. According to Jewitt (2014), multimodality provides meaning through the configuration of pictures, gestures, reflection, good posture, sound, writing, music, utterance, and other elements. Moreover, Embong and Hassan (2013) also state that, “Transmitting values mean values are passed from generation to generation for maintaining a society. Regarding this matter, studying any form of media would help individuals and communities to learn about values, histories, and cultures better” (p. 93). For these reasons, multimodality in animation research is inextricably linked to the study of both language and visual modes. Hence, Malay cultural values in animation are suitable to be examined using a multimodality approach because the elements of Malay cultural values can be portrayed in both language and visual forms.

Based on the findings from past studies, many previous studies regarding animation from the Western context, comprising different themes such as education, gender, and morals, had applied a multimodality approach to look at its effectiveness by means of studying the language and visuals as animation functions to disseminate information. Nevertheless, it is still unclear about Malaysian animation from the perspective of multimodality because no prevalent studies have been conducted as the studies were more focalized on non-animated. As visuals are capable to transmit ideas and messages, uncertainty comes to light on how the portrayals of Malay cultural values in Malaysian animation can convey meanings in connection with multimodality, yet no rigorous attempts have been recognized by past researchers. This prompts further investigation, as to why this study is carried out. Therefore, this research will seek to investigate the portrayal of Malay cultural values in Malaysian animation by looking at the multimodality perspective.

1.3 Problem Statement

Many researchers had been conducted studies regarding animation from different aspects and viewpoints. Most researchers mainly focused on studying material culture or known as tangible objects of Malay cultural values in Malaysian animation (Abd Mubin & Yaacob, 2018; Abdul Ghani, 2015; Abdullah, 2018; Djumala, 2018; Wan Mahmood, 2021). According to Abdul Ghani (2015), the objects in the visual cultural background of animation in which not specifically refer to the subjects will give an advantage and increase contextual knowledge to the audience. Abd Mubin and Yaacob (2018) state that the portrayals of local culture and cultural identity in local animated television series were detected verbally and visually based on agriculture activities, traditional garments and accessories, cuisine, architecture, and apparatus categories. In addition, Wan Mahmood (2021) discovers such convincing Malay artistic culture depiction comprising Malay folklore iconic figures, royal language and other Malay cultural items as to disseminate the knowledge of Malay treasures to international audiences, particularly. Therefore, the researchers believe that animation could steer and promote Malay cultural values. Wan Mahmood (2021) also mentions that *Keris Siamang Tunggal* is essential in influencing and consolidating Malay artistic assets in the view of the Western world. Non-material culture such as *Budi's* values were found to be instilled in the characters' personalities in the animations (Fadzil & Dalal, 2020). This can be supported by Rasheed et al. (2018) who suggest that the animated film is created to embed human traits into characters. However, very little attention is given to non-material culture or intangible objects of Malay cultural values and how the intangible objects are portrayed in animation that plays a significant role in promoting culture has not been extensively discussed yet.

Narrowing down to another aspect, multimodality was mainly employed in animation studies from the Western context (Farnia & Gerami, 2019; Linstrand et al., 2016; Moftah et al.,

2020; Rasheed et al., 2018; Shehatta, 2020; Silva & Dias, 2020). Multimodality is suitable to examine animation as stated by Mofteh et al. (2020) who emphasize meaning does not rely on written text only because nearly all texts are multimodal as they utilize verbal and visual semiotic systems. According to Silva and Dias (2020), multimodality starts with the reckoning about the consistency of images' meanings which have a social foundation. Linstrand et al. (2016) also point out that the social semiotic approach of which is constructed, leading to investigate how the world is portrayed in dissimilar situations and modes critically as different modes construct different logics as the way they represent. These studies were conducted to discover how semiotic resources consisting of language and visuals can construct meanings in animation. Nevertheless, no exhaustive attempts to date have approached multimodality into Malaysian animation, especially by examining the aspect of Malay cultural values portrayals. This is due to most researchers were only focusing on employing the content analysis method to determine the presence of Malay cultural values in animation by promoting the culture to audiences. Additionally, researchers were entirely focusing to employ multimodality on non-animated (Abdullah et al., 2020; Embong & Hassan, 2013).

Delving deeper into another aspect, past researchers had not given full attention to the non-linguistic perspective of Malay cultural values, which were only identifying and categorizing the types of Malay cultural values from a linguistic perspective (Abd Mubin & Yaacob, 2018; Abdul Ghani, 2015; Abdullah, 2018; Wan Mahmood, 2021). In this case, there is one study by Wan Mahmood (2021) that arises questions regarding Malay cultural values context in *Keris Siamang Tunggal*, which mainly focalized on identifying Malay cultural items and the way English subtitle depicts each of the items in the film. The concerns came up after the researcher's statements. According to Wan Mahmood (2021), "The main issue is to look into what and how the Malay cultural items in *Keris Siamang Tunggal* have been rendered in a