Upin & Ipin: Promoting malaysian culture values through animation

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Abstract

Malaysian children lately have been exposed or influenced heavily by digital media entertainment. The rise of such entertainment tends to drive them away from understanding and appreciating the values of Malaysian culture. Upin and Ipin animation has successfully promoted Malaysian folklore culture and has significantly portrayed the art of Malaysian values including Islamic values by providing the platform for harmonious relationship among different societies or groups or religious backgrounds. The focus of this research is to look into the usage of Malaysian culture iconic visual styles such as backgrounds, lifestyles, character archetypes and narrative (storytelling). Therefore, we hope that this research will benefit the younger generation by highlighting the meaning and importance of implicit Malaysian culture.

Key words: Upin and Ipin; animation; narrative; folklore; culture; character archetypes.

Upin e Ipin: promoviendo la cultura malasia a través de los valores de la animación

Resumen

Recientemente los niños en Malasia están siendo fuertemente expuestos cuando no influenciados por los medios masivos de entretenimiento digital. Esto les lleva una falta de comprensión y apreciación de la importancia de los valores de su propia cultura. La serie de animación propia Upin & Ipin ha promovido con éxito las diferentes culturas de Malasia y obtenido valores culturales significativos que representan a su arte, incluyendo el islámico, y proporcionando así una plataforma de relación armónica entre los diferentes grupos que componen la sociedad en Malasia, ya sea civil o religiosa. El foco de esta investigación analizará el uso de su cultura icónica como fondo, con elementos tales como su estilo de vida, los arquetipos de personajes y su narrativa (storytelling). De sus resultados se espera puedan beneficiarse a las generaciones más jóvenes de Malasia, al conocer el significado implícito y la importancia de la cultura de su país.

Palabras clave: UPIN y IPIN; animación; narración; el folclore; la cultura; los arquetipos de personajes.

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1. Introduction

Upin & Ipin in Malaysia is Malaysian television series of computer-animated shorts produced by Les' Copaque Production, which features the life and adventures of the eponymous twin brothers in a fictional *Malaysian Kampung* or village atmosphere. Upin & Ipin was introduced on Malaysian's private television channel TV9 on 13 September 2007 as an eight-episode programme for Muslim Ramadan/Eid special, to inspire significance of the Islamic holy month especially amongst children. It was also aired on Disney Channel Asia and can be considered as one of the most successful computer 3D animated television series in Malaysia. Upin is the elder twin brother of Ipin, though only by 5 minutes. He is the more outspoken one and usually the mastermind behind the cheeky antics the twins do. He is distinguished by a twirl of hair on top of his head. Ipin is the younger twin brother of Upin. He is the slightly quieter sidekick to his brother. His trademark is his habit to agree to any statements by saying the word "Betul, Betul, Betul or "True, "True", "True"." He is obsessed with fried chicken.

Upin and Ipin animated series has provided a different paradigm of edutainment with ideal interaction using various ethnics groups or cultures to propagate racial harmony and stability to the nation. Upin and Ipin *mise-en-scène* narrative, visual semiotics, and characters traits symbolize unity or typical Malaysian identity among group ethnics focusing on life in the rural area. It portrays the close tie relations of different ethnic groups, for example, Malays, Chinese and Indians and Malaysians daily life style that creates a bridge of tolerance, sensitivity, harmony and uniqueness that can be shared together.

In spite of the similarities that Malaysians share, there are several linguistic features which are distinctive that make them unique in their very own way. The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect, despite a person's demographics or background. It means understand that each individual is unique. The ethnic groups in Malaysia are diverse in their own tactic such as their dressing, tradition festivals, food, first language, and also their language styles even when communicating in the national language that is *Bahasa Melayu*. According to Salwati et al. (2013), the characters in Upin and Ipin represents the identity of Malaysians, of which their sensitivity and acceptance of others through respecting and acknowledging other cultures despite their differences.

Also, Upin and Ipin provides satire of moral and Islamic values through mixed-cultural manifestation that not only attracts local viewers but also has been accepted throughout other Asia neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, and Philippines. The visual culture and animation juxtaposition has provided a strong significance where computer animated visuals are able to steer, promote and subjugate cultural values as an identity or icon of Malaysia.

Upin and Ipin animated series has successfully portrayed the icon of character traits and lifestyle of Malaysia as 'Truly Asia', also promoting Malaysian cultures,

and has gained popularity for the immensity of moral content and Islamic values (Fadil Abidin, 2010). Upin and Ipin is not only portraying animation as a medium of entertainment with flexible, dynamic or versatile approach, but also it is more of manifesting the importance of culture realm of Malaysia to be appreciated especially by the younger generation.

According to Paul Wells in his book, Understanding Animation (1998), animation as a film language and film art is a more sophisticated and flexible medium than live-action film (suggesting that animation was more of a hand rather than a photographic job) but maintained the frame-by-frame approach.

Upin and Ipin visualizes the art of 3D animation as a uniquely expressive art form that provides the creator with control over both the appearance and the movement of characters and objects. According to Effendi (2002), there are a few advantages of animated movies as a learning medium, namely: film animation can create a lasting impression in the self-teacher or an individual (student); voice and movement shown is filming a reality, and it is according to the material presented. In other words, Upin and Ipin animated TV series is the successor of the environment that is able to provide mood and expression, while encouraging and enhancing motivation that instill attitudes and other affective terms; as an edutainment themed that contains positive values or cultural icons and motives that can inspire thoughts and discussion in the heterogeneous group or society. Leung et al. (2005) defines culture as values, beliefs, norms, and behavioural patterns of a group. Culture consists of several elements of which some are implicit and others are explicit. Most often these elements are explained by terms such as behaviours, values, norms, and basic assumptions. Malaysia is a multicultural community living together harmoniously and is also known for its colourful cultures including the various festivals, food, ethnicities, traditions, and many more. With current population of 28 million people and the number is still growing, it is vital to foster unity for the country and to retain the harmonious relationship among different ethnic groups. This is a key factor that that had made it possible for the country in attaining its independence. According to Chuah Abdullah (2012), despite having no significant or violent racial and religious conflicts since 1969, there have been signs of emerging ethnic tension and sensitive issues every now and then in the nation. Some of issues are related mainly to political or socio-economy issues.

This is due to fact that the Malaysian society is pluralistic; therefore, the individual ethnic culture and social way should not exclusively belong to any one ethnic group. The nation and state of Malaysia verily had very rich and customary extraordinary culture and we hope and aim to create the diversified culture which benefits us (especially the young generation) and makes of its resources a strong nation and state of Malaysia (Huatuan Utama 1983. p. 135).

Upin and Ipin plays an important role in instilling racial harmony and tolerance by promoting culture values of Malaysian society especially among the kids or young generation. Furthermore, not only challenges are faced internally, but also externally known as 'Digital Natives' or 'Born Digital. The term, Digital Native" was initiated

by Prensky (2001) referring to the young generations especially students nowadays who are the native speakers of the digital language of computers, mobile phones, video games and the Internet. Unfortunately, today's younger generation seems to neglect the importance of richness of culture values that existed years before, which represents meaningful lifestyle. This culture-based lifestyle includes food, language, festive season, games and many more. Nevertheless, today's younger generation prefers to be 'online' or in 'digital world', such as by playing computer games, browsing the internet, mobile phones, and others. Also, some of these digital materials could trigger negative consequences such as violent behaviors, vandalism, drugs, suicide and many others. According to Anderson et al. (2008), psychological studies indicate that playing violent games increases aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviours, in both short term and long term.   These violent tendencies can extend into real-life situations. For example, Malaysia Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the ratio of suicides from 2007 to 2010 was 1.3 for every 100,000 people and almost 0.26 percent are influenced by the violent video games that they had been playing (Joseph Sipalan, 2012).

    Thus, having realized how important it is to determine the accuracy of the depiction of culture identities portrayed in the animation series, this study therefore investigated the culture features such as visual background, lifestyle, character archetypes and narrative or the art of storytelling of the Malaysian society as portrayed in Upin and Ipin animated series.

2. Animation & Culture Significance

   Upin and Ipin is an art of Malaysian animation which has won people's hearts from all walks of life, and across different races and age groups. It has long had a constitutive role in disseminating ideologies, concepts, symbolism, metaphors or even portraying culture as well. It applies a technique that can combine a wide variety of graphics, abstract forms, indexical photography, text and other visual materials within a single frame. Animation can create a density of juxtaposition, visual metaphor, satire and other effects to support and visually underpin cultural or political agenda (Suzanne Buchan, 2010). Also, Paul Wells (1998) explains that the state of animation that is integral to the animated film relates to 'the artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms'. The art form of animation developed is a way to reflect our own physical and mental evolutionary process. Animation is a powerful medium for conveying complex ideas, dreams and emotions. Television animated series, particularly, plays an important role to children development since animation often appeals to children as its target audience. The use of cognitive skills and how they relate to many aspects inside the animation such as narrative, character, and many more influence what knowledge and skills that they acquire from watching animation. When it comes to animation and culture, it is quite difficult to define as it is more elusive or insubstantial, but culture has been maintained throughout specific

means i.e. food, traditional clothing, religion (Mohd Amir et al., 2010). Upin and Ipin portrayed more of culture environment, it provides a different domain to various characteristics that define the country that we live in.

But Upin dan Ipin's success in inculcating cultural sense is most likely inspired by the success of first Malaysian animated film to be aired, known as Hikayat Sang Kancil a short 2D animated film produced by Anandam Xavier in 1978 (Hassan,2003), and later Usop Sontorian, Keluang Man, Boboi Boy and others. Upin Ipin. not only focusses on the aspects of profit or glamour or just a typical animated local production but also represents the identity of "Malaysian Animation" that is synonym especially among children. Interestingly, Malaysians who have grown up watching Mickey Mouse identify a similar quality in Upin dan Ipin, a local animation that matches the standard of Japanese anime. Upin and Ipin animation reflects the emergence of local arts and technology content (television) which is so refreshing to the eyes of the Malaysian people that it has a great potential in delivering entertainment, identity and quality simultaneously. Watching television is not a passive action. Instead, children tend to mentally process what they have watched. According to Huston et al. (1992), children not only look for entertainment, but they watch television as a medium to learn something new or to get influenced. Fujioka (1999) states that television is such a powerful social agent which provides a mediated social contact environment through which viewers construct their social reality and develop their attitudes towards other social groups. In other words, Upin and Ipin animated television series are making a very constructive contribution by presenting considerate and accurate portrayals of distant places and people including their cultures. Animation has its ambivalences. Thus, it contributes towards the role in educating young children but there is significant potential to capitalise on their ability to enhance development and learning especially related to social or cultural issues (Luckin.et al., 2003).

The narrative used in Upin Ipin animation signifies the overall cultural visual language (terms referred as the biological and cognitive capacity that humans have for conveying concepts in the visual graphic modality) from character personas, traits, archetypes, and background within the 'Malaysian' contextual multicultural. Therefore, Upin and Ipin signifies the art of animation that influences the children's cognitive and thinking faculty which responds to the cultural scenario in the country. This includes the styles of characters, the visual appeals, characteristic and expressions, attires, surroundings, food, moral values and etc. Upin and Ipin 3D animation has great impact on children's mind, as animation has strong cultural resonances for many children. According to Wilson (2010), the use of animation not only can influence children's cognitive and academic skills, but can also determine children's social interactions, identity and development. Next, we look into the art of Upin and Ipin animation that incorporates cultural visual values art and entertainment.

3. Visual Cultural Background

In animation, the art of visual background or environment is vital in establishing the mood or scenario of a scene that will integrate with the characters involved. In Upin and Ipin animation, there are several cultural visuals that symbolize the multi-cultural Malaysian identity. As a multicultural country, Malaysia is a fertile ground for studies on culture. First, in terms of location, Upin and Ipin animation series mainly centralizes on life in the rural area. It portrays the close stratum relations of different native groups, for example, Malays, Chinese and Indians and Malaysians daily life. The characters depict the identity of Malaysians whose sensitivity and acceptance of others are through respecting and acknowledging other cultures despite their differences. Thus, the objects in the background (not usually the subjects) will benefit or enhance contextual information for the audience.

Most of the Upin and Ipin episodes focus on a Malay rural area, mainly the setting is a wooden house in Kampung Durian Runtuh. In Upin and Ipin episode One (1), the theme called "Kami 1 Malaysia" (We Are One Malaysia), see Figure 1.0, that envisages the environment of Malay culture background such as wooden house, trees, flowers, animals (Chicken or duck are let loose on the territory, being fed by surroundings resources and leftovers) and much more. For example, the traditional Malay house roofs are very steep and always have wide overhangs for shading and protection from heavy tropical downpours. Besides, on the lawn, there are local flower plants and the usual daily used spices and herbs such as ginger, lemongrass, pandan leaves and ulam (local salads). Upin Ipin illustrates the aesthetic art of Malaysian lifestyle. (Doo Ree,2008).

Figure 1.0 Kampung Durian Runtuh Malay Environment

The reflections of Malay culture are emphasized in Upin and Ipin animation. In episode 13, "The World Cup in Africa" episode, several Malaysian visual styles are shown. For example the food stall of "Warung Uncle Muthu". This scene describes the moderate representation of Malaysian society portrayed by Uncle Muthu character (Indian Malaysian) in serving food (mamak fried noodles) to Upin and Ipin and other supporting characters (see Figure 2), with the place setting of Kampung Durian Runtuh village.

Thus, Upin and Ipin has successfully portrayed a 'friendly' and established mood and identity of background and character placement of a Malay aesthetics culture village that exists in harmony with other various ethnic groups in Malaysia. Location or background scenes are one of the many important aspects of animation or filming, just as finding the right actors to portray a role, and just as important as the choice of music used in the film (Sandy,2011). Upin and Ipin has propagated the important visual enhancement for an animated series with total causative effects. The actors, location or settings, or cinematography inside Upin and Ipin transcend into the emotive feedback experienced while watching what transpires on the television that may inspire, influence or develop the art of appreciation among the children relating to the importance of preserving the aesthetics of Malaysian culture value.The Malay society are also rich with Malay values which include affiliation, appreciative, fairness, loyalty, obedience, tolerant and humility(pologetic behaviour among)the Malays , which Upin and Ipin animation signifies directly by manifesting the Malaysian typical moral values and character archetypes.

Figure 2.0 Uncle Muthu Warung food Stall Malaysian Reflection of Multi-Culture

4. Character Archetypes

According to Aristotle, characters in narratives have the second place in importance. It exists to fulfil the role that the event requires him or her to perform. This kind of character usually has a very specific trait assigned to them in the story The psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung, used the concept of archetype in his theory of the human psyche. Archetypes or sometimes known as 'Traits" (Bryan Tillman, 2011) are basically universal, mythic character archetypes, reside within the collective unconscious of people the world over (Jung, 2003). Jung main archetypes are not in a way that each person may be classified as one, but rather we have all the basic archetypes inside us, which is the shadow that embodies chaos and wildness of character, the anima/animus which represents our true self, and the self where all aspects are brought together as one. In Upin and Ipin, the animated characters archetypes represent fundamental human motifs of our experience as we evolved; consequentially, they evoke deep emotion and also have implications in personality, bringing a contribution or an orientation depending on the correlation to a certain type of personality or certain dimensions of it.

This protagonist characters (especially Upin and Ipin) represent a unique feature that are able to influence children's or parents towards a more tactile of traits, cultural understanding with moral values while watching. Figure 3.0 describes the versatile and uniqueness of Upin and Ipin family characters that create 'Malaysian' personas, with appeal to typical Malaysian characteristic (child or adult). This character establishment in Upin and Ipin animated series not only signifies the artistic or creativity values, but most importantly it is able to imply the Malaysian cultural importance. From Figure 3.0, we can comprehend that there is a dynamic Malaysian multicultural mix of ethnics that are able to communicate and live together in peaceful environment.

This is to say that there are several characters representing diverse cultural or ethnic groups which are shown in the animation series. The Malay characters are Opah, Kak Ros, Fizi, Ehsan, Upin, Ipin, Cikgu Jasmin, and Tok Dalang. Mutu, Jarjit, and Raju are the characters to represent the Indians, whilst the Chinese ethnic group is represented by Mei Mei and Ah Tong.

This characters symbolize the mixed cultural composition ethnics that are allowed to interact or respond with the main characters (Upin and Ipin) and other characters or surroundings which is more of a 'Malay' culture lifestyle.

Figure 3.0 The character archetypes of Upin and Ipin as Malaysian Characteristic

The character attributes in Upin and Ipin animated series demonstrate the importance of moral values as a reflection or symbol of Malaysian and Islamic values. These values are coherent with the archetypes characters. According to Rezki Perdani et al. (2009), from the research conducted among children aged seven (7) to eight (8) years old in Malaysia in 2009, it showed that almost 98.7 percent like Upin and Ipin compared to other local animations or international edutainment programmes (such as Blue's Clues, Sesame Street) programs. According to Jean Ann Wright (2005) in her book Animation Writing and Development, while an infant is still unable to sit by himself or herself, he or she enjoys watching television just by paying attention to the altering patterns of lights, colours and sounds.

Therefore, at this sensory-motor stage, animation for them is just the same as other forms of entertainment as they just pay attention to the basic forms, movement and colours. Their lacking of object permanence ability does not permit them to understand the existence of a character in the movie.Upin and Ipin upholds high social responsibility by never failing to integrate various moral values in each of their episodes. Moral values such as truthfulness, teamwork, obedience, respect, tolerance and sincerity are the fundamentals towards inaugurating unity and harmony among the Malaysian society. These moral values correspond to the Islamic values and universal good values. Furthermore, Upin and Ipin also manifests Muslims' way of life through several scenes that show the fasting month of Ramadhan, celebrating Hari Raya or Eid festival with non-Muslim, learning the holy-Quran and many others. The character archetypes in Upin and Ipin apprise cultural themes and images that express significant human concerns especially the society in Malaysia such as responsiblity,

love, friendship, family, religion, culture and survival. The characters are always in service to the story.

They create a psychological registry of universal experience that Jung named the "collective unconscious," which forms a treasury of powerful, shared images and symbols that are expressed in dreams, art, fairy tales, stories, myths, and religious motifs from across widely different times and cultures. Archetypes have a universal power that, when tapped effectively, is proven to generate animation and films. Jung developed a plethora of archetypes and their semiotics which consist of twelve (12) such as *The Innocent, The Hero, The Sage, The Lover* character of archetypes ironically in Upin and Ipin animation, has touched this elements indirectly to enhance the message related to entertainment and cultural phenomenon.

In terms of character design with archetypes, Upin and Ipin exists as a result of the content or story. This is a common norm in US animation such as *Disney's Mickey Mouse , Marvel's Iron Man, Spiderman, or DC Comics Batman* where the story will dictate that the audience needs a Hero. The Hero is defined as someone who is brave, selfless, and willing to assist no matter at what cost. But in Upin and Ipin, the character and narrative formation is not much about the concept of Hero (see Figure 4.0), but it is more towards the aura of kids environment (laugh, play, fun, being naughty), where the characters interact with each other and the surroundings and are able to adapt the art of living together and solving problems (responsible) within Malaysian lifestyle. Upin and Ipin characters have really big heads and eyes, short bodies, bright colors and simple visual composition. This is important to cater the main target audience. Children and adults have a different way of seeing things. Compared to adults who see things more abstractly and conceptually, the way children seeing things are more imaginary.

Figure 4.0 The character and narrative establishment is focus on character nature

As animation and archetypes used in Upin and Ipin provides us with things that cannot be achieved in real life as Paul Wells further explained in his book, "Animation can defy the laws of gravity, challenge our perceived view of space and time, and endow lifeless things with dynamic and vibrant properties" (1998, pp.11).

Therefore, animation provides us with imagination that we cannot get from live action movie. Imagination is an vital aspect in children development and understanding cultural values and differences. When children watch an Upin and Ipin animation narrative, they will relate themselves with the characters in the animation. By putting themselves in the shoes of one of the character in the animation, their personalities are being influenced by the archetype of the character in the story.

5. Narrative in Upin and Ipin Animation

Children have encountered stories even before they start school. Children are told stories by their parents and other significant people in their lives (Weinberger, 1996). Today's, society wherein parents lead busy lives and thus do not tell stories to children, the impersonal communication media of films and television take the place of parents in entertaining children (Julongo, 1992). The art of oral storytelling by experts or amateur storytellers is gradually disappearing in modern life, but it still survives in the Malay villages. They fail to realize that a rich cultural heritage will be irrevocably lost if those tales are not preserved (Norhayati et al.2004). Great animation starts with a great "idea" for a story. Expressing or telling stories is an age-old method used to communicate ideas and recreate and preserve culture, memories and traditions. Upin and Ipin applies the art of learning how to communicate a story through animation, that will be challenged through the use symbols and movement to effectively convey the messages and stories to its intended target audience. Upin and Ipin provides a different style of communicating with audience with simple storytelling, which inspires from imagination, dream and most importantly from our lifestyle childhood or from our ancestors. Other cultures surely have initiatory stories that show a similar map of the human journey from childhood to adulthood to anyone willing to listen.

According to Kim (2013), stories and dreams are just two venues where we can fish for archetypal information. Our ancestors have provided us with other venues we can use as archetypal tools. The venue of Kampung Durian Runtuh village, is the dominant Malay culture setting used in Upin and Ipin to establish various archetypes or traits of stories. Another aspect of Upin and Ipin narrative approach is the concept using myth and legends, as part of preserving the identity of Malay culture. Myth means a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view or explain a practice, belief or natural phenomena occurred in the past. The characters, identity and events in Malay cultural history are well preserved in the form of myth and legend. For example, in Upin and Ipin More than ten (10) animated episodes focus on the lifestyle of Upin and Ipin in many types of

scenarios including myth, legends, dreams, experiences (childhood), events, fantasy, sci-fi and imagination. For example, "Upin and Ipin: Pengembaraan Ke Pulau Harta Karun" or Upin and Ipin: Journey To Treasure Island episode, describes the journey of the twins (Upin and Ipin) and their friends Fizi, Ehsan, Mei-Mei, Jarjit and Mail as they go through their daily lives full of exciting activities and tonnes of creative imaginations inspired from Malay famous myth and legend warriors Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat, including their voyages to the seven seas as pirates as well as their racing adventures in futuristic hovering vehicles. The series stays true to its fun educational stories, instilled with moral and cultural values and topped with humour and action making it a series the whole family are able to learn and enjoy together. Also, some of the characters adopt names of famous Malay legend warriors (e.g Hang Tuah or Hang Jebat), where the original Upin and Ipin, become *Laksamana Hang Upin* and *Laksamana Hang Ipin* in this episode.

In addition, Hang Upin and Hang Ipin wear Malay warrior costumes (Baju Melayu and Tanjak,) see Figure 5.0, to portray the significance or importance of culture or symbol in Malaysian society.   In other words, Upin and Ipin attempts to exploit its influence on the children watching the series by promoting cultural awareness and therefore, preserving historical and cultural values of the country. Animation has the most impact at this stage, where a child can relate himself to many things from the characters other than what the animation shows in the narrative.

Figure 5.0 Upin and Ipin Portraying Significance of Malaysian Culture as a Warrior

Upin and Ipin creates a more diversified cultural awareness involving other ethnic groups, apart from Malay, an effort that children especially find it fascinating. For example, the use of "Pantun" or idioms whose origin traces back to the Malay society who has been using it for decades. Pantun in Upin and Ipin, is used rather exaggeratedly by Jarjit who is Upin and Ipin's classmate who likes to use *pantuns* especially "Dua Tiga Kucing Berlari" or Two Three Cats Start To Run, in his dialogues.

Ironically, this style of pantuns or poems (mostly 2 lines) used by Jarjit (same age with Upin and Ipin but has a booming adult-like voice), eventually becomes a trademark in Upin and Ipin. Indirectly, it suggests that other ethnic groups in Malaysia are also supportive on preserving this cultural identity through language or aesthetic words such as *pantun*. This is the uniqueness of Malaysian culture that Upin and Ipin cultivates in the animation narrative for the audience to perceive, promote and preserve the cultural elements of this country. Thus, having realized that the media plays an important function for cultural production, by which the meaning of ethnic (ethnicity) is articulated and re-presented (Hall, 1996), Upin and Ipin animation series was therefore chosen due to its popularity and the narrative plot that reflects the true identity of Malaysian society. Apart from that. Upin and Ipin also uses urban legend phenomenon with supernatural flavours as part of its narrative to bring the audience closer to the myths and beliefs of the society in this country. It is very common that Malay society has a strong sense of fear, uncanny with old animistic belief. The general word used among Malay society is 'Hantu'. One of the famous ghosts known among Malaysians is 'Toyol', often translated into English as "goblin". 'Toyol' is actually a small child spirit invoked from a dead human fetus. Traditionally described as looking more or less like a naked or near-naked toddler, modern depictions often give them green or greyish skin, fangs, and pointy ears. The 'Toyol' may be used by its master to steal things from other people, or to do mischief. Thus, in Upin and Ipin episode "*Kisah 2 Malam"* or *"Story About Two Nights"* (episodes 1 & 2) describes the twins were scared that the 'Toyol' were in their house at night. Even though the story concept and direction focusses on Upin and Ipin's paranormal experience, the underlying theme revolves around today's society that still very much believes in the existence of ghosts and paranormal beings.

Animists especially in Malay society believe each anima is a powerful spirit that can help or hurt them and are to be worshipped or feared or in some way attended to. Animism is a primitive religion whose adherents have for thousands of years deified animals, stars, and idols of any kind, and practiced spiritism, witchcraft, divination and astrology. Also, another interesting scene from this episode is MeiMei (Chinese girl) character, who has an encounter with "Chinese Vampire" or ghost that was trying to confront and scare her when she is walking home, but in the end she uses the common Chinese belief by placing a piece of yellow paper with Chinese ritual prayer writings (see Figure 6.0) onto her forehead to prevent it from attacking her.

Again, this is another cross-cultural element manipulated in Upin and Ipin to show the unique blend of multiracial society in the country. According to Barbara (2008), pre-schoolers and younger elementary school children (two to seven years of age) are

most frightened by characters and events that look or sound scary including creatures such as ghosts, witches, and monsters are likely to provoke fear in younger children; even characters that are benign but visually grotesque. But, with 3D computer animated visual styles, Upin and Ipin has managed to create a different style notion of narrative content, visual concept, adorable characters, background and humour, in line with the audience needs.

Figure 6.0 Vampire being attached with a Chinese Yellow paper on his fore head

Another creative concept of narrative used in Upin and Ipin is dream. A typical art of fiction where Upin and Ipin provides the audience with series of imagination, dream and laughter. The story concept of or art of narrative is basically using various types of concepts or genres such as adventure and mystery, Sci-Fi, detective, and sports. For instance, in the premiere motion of Malaysia's first 3D fully computer animated film Upin and Ipin: *Geng Pengembaraan* or *The Adventure Begins* (see Figure 7.0), the narrative art used explores mystery and adventures relating to local culture significance. For instance, the fruit orchard or sometimes known as Dusun, is one of the most familiar local culture that most Malaysians especially among the Malay ethnic group, identify themselves to. Fruit orchard has always been linked with the 'Malay' society particularly in rural areas. Again, the art of sharing concept is portrayed clearly with other ethnics groups like the Chinese or Indians. Activities of eating, caring, sharing or playing together create memorable and meaningful moments. Indirectly, in the beginning, the plot of the story depicts the culture importance in Malay society with Badrol character inviting his best friend Lim to go on a camping trip at his old Kampung where he grew up, with intentions to experience some long-forgotten true Malaysian life in his Grandfather's durian orchard.

The traditional *kampung* or villeage inside Upin and Ipin settings for the storyline that would include cultural expressions, folklore and some traditional performances, food, and crafts that Malaysians could relate to.

Figure 7.0 narrative art as exploring mystery and adventure relating with local culture significance

In an interview with Upin and Ipin animation production company's (Les Copaque) Chairman, Mr Burhanuddin in August 2011, he explained that after several experiments with variety of genres in television series for Upin and Ipin, finally he noticed that Asia was hungry for animation that is tailored to our culture and that would benefit the children (Mohd Hafidz, 2012). Upin and Ipin narrative plot using vast amount of "dream" concepts in their animation as part of their own original (local) culture ingredients, are clearly juxtapose the children's notion of behaviours and imaginations that exist in their life with convergence and divergence.

6. Conclusion

Upin and Ipin has clearly signified the importance of animation and culture significance, describing the art of how it communicates with the audience to provide edutainment. It has delivered a strong message through narratives, characters and background archetypes, motives or metaphors that highlight clearly the importance of culture and solidarity in the country. This year's 57th Malaysia Independence Day or Merdeka 57th celebration used Upin and Ipin as the official icon that symbolizes unity and solidarity of this Nation. In most (if not all) animation, culture is reflected through different mediums.

Some are reflected by the physical presence of characters or backgrounds, some are reflected with the visual objects within the animation and even the language they speak. Since the beginning of animation, people have used what they understand and

comprehend around them to develop plots and narrative. Animation like Upin and Ipin, is on the rise and may well continue to do so in the near future. It is a global trend in which if better understood, the more benefits we can reap out of Malaysian identity of animation. Upin and Ipin can become a powerful influence social tool but importantly as well is the fact than the culture and identity of a nation can be shared through its lenses

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