

## The Comparative Studies Between Malaysian Animation and Japanese Animation

<sup>1</sup>Dahlan Abdul Ghani, <sup>1</sup>Nor Masliza Binti Md Azahar, <sup>2</sup>Luqman Zulhilmi Bin Abdul Alim

<sup>1</sup>Malaysian Institute of Information Technology, Universiti Kuala Lumpur,  
1016 Jalan Sultan Ismail, 50250 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Limkokwing University, Inovasi 1-1, Jalan Teknokrat 1/1, 63000 Cyberjaya, Malaysia  
dahlan@unikl.edu.my

---

**Abstract:** Japanese animation style often characterized by colorful graphics, vibrant characters and fantastical themes. However, the Malaysian animation is still new in this industry and still has many lack to make a animation. Japanese are often classified by target demographic including children's, girls, boys and a diverse range of genres targeting an adult audience. The aim of the research to study about the similarities studies between Malaysian animation and Japanese animation. This study will discuss on several aspects such as character design and cultural.

**Key words:** Japanese animation, graphics, Malaysian, character design, cultural, fantastical themes

---

### INTRODUCTION

During World War II the entire Japanese nation was mobilized. The people were forced to conform to the government's demands or pay the ultimate price. According to Schodt (1983) those who failed to cooperate were punished by "preventive detention, bans on writing and social ostracism while those who recanted were rewarded with rehabilitation programs and support from the community. Artists who had spent most of their lives criticizing the government did an about-face and offered wholehearted support to the militarists" (Schodt, 1983). The term "anime" refers generally to any sort of cartoon television series or movie made in Japan. The word is derived from the English word "animation" but in popular culture it tends to have a more narrow meaning and often describes a particular type or genre of show. Characters all tend to have a similar look, for instance, no matter their creators and the story arcs that drive the action are usually complex and deep. The genre is generally considered an art form and is popular all over the world. Napier identified anime as a product of Japanese popular culture which is exported to a large part of the world. It was not easy to get to where anime is standing now but it has to start somewhere. Previously, anime was overshadowed by Japanese live-action cinema. With initially a limited scope of children's entertainment, anime grew to be consumed by adults as well making its way through corners of the world by offering a wide variety of genre which caters to various interests, i.e.,

Slam Dunk (sports), Yakitate Japan (bread-making), La Corda D'oro Prima Passo (romance) and Dragonball (fighting).

A professor of the Japanese Program at Tufts University and acclaimed anime critic, anime did not see its full revival until much later in the 20th century: "Japanese anime was initially very hard to come by in the West like Star Blazers crossed into American television but they were almost always Americanized beyond recognition with infelicitous dubs, American names and sometimes, mangled plot lines. Somehow, however, a few of the viewers began to recognize that they were seeing something different from American television fare and ultimately became aware of the Japanese origins".

Around 1940, many organizations for artists and cartoonists were formed. Among them were the New Cartoonists Association of Japan (Shin Nippon Mangaka Kyokai) and the New Cartoonists Faction group (Shin Mangaha Shudan). During that time, the government used the few remaining cartoonists who were not banned from working or who were not in the army, to influence the people through their artwork by creating comic strips filled with propaganda to use against the nation's enemies.

Anime transcends race, culture, language and communicative barriers because it allows the viewer to step outside him or herself and experience new culture. One of the most unique traits of anime is how animators can incorporate ancient Japanese legends, myths and history into their animation with a modern twist. Miyazaki



Fig. 1: Malaysia first animated series “Sang Kancil”

Hayao head of the Japanese animation company Studio Ghibli helped convince the general public that anime was a unique and extraordinary medium capable of limitless possibilities for any gender or age. With approximately 440 anime studios, Studio Ghibli is the most important and largest animation studio in Japan with over 150 staff members.

The title of the research is to comparative studies between Malaysian animation and Japanese animation. Animation in Malaysia began in 1946 through the establishment of the Malayan Film Unit (currently known as Filem Negara). Animation was limited to moving text and objects back then rather than referring to television series and film. The first animated film to appear was Hikayat Sang Kancil (Fig. 1), a short film produced by Anandam Xavier in 1978. A few titles followed shortly after with the appearance of Sang Kancil and Monyet, Sang Kancil and Buaya, Gagak Yang Bijak, Arnab Yang Sombong and Singa Yang Haloba which ranged from 1984-1987. The first significant improvement on Malaysia animation began in 1995 with the initiative of Usop Sontorian.

The first locally produced animation series for the Malaysian market. The effort by cartoonist Ujang and director Kamn Ismail under Kharisma Production was a starting point to the local animation titles that lead to other titles such as Keluang Man, Anak-Anak Sidek and Badang. The improvement comes as a result of new technologies which have altered the dependence from traditional cel animation techniques to a more computer-centered method of animation production. The development and progression of Malaysian animation have stayed stagnant or slowed down due to unknown reasons. However, the introduction of Upin and Ipin in 2007 in the form of 3D animation saw a notable resurgence in the Malaysian animation industry which has led to other popular titles such as Boboiboy and Dunia Eicak.

Similar to other animation industries in the world, Malaysian animation is largely influenced by American and Japanese animation. The initial influence of anime on Malaysian animation can be seen through the farming out of ink and paint work in 1985 to Lensafilm, a Malaysian commercial film studio. This eventually led to the training of Malaysian personnel in Toei Animation, Japan which in turn influenced some physical aspects of Malaysian animation.

A well-known anime filmmaker Mamoru Oshii stated that when an animation was being produced, the only audience they had in mind were the Japanese and not the entire world. Oshii intended his animation films to be locally accepted before taking place in the hearts of people from around the globe. Japan has shown that this mechanism can work. This is proof that in order for Malaysian animation to thrive, it does not necessarily mean that Malaysian identity has to be sacrificed in order to cater to the wants of a more global audience but rather utilizes signs and symbols that represent Malaysia and share it with the world through our own brand of animation.

**Definition of animation:** Animation can be assumed as part of a wider cultural industry through various complex sets of signs and symbols. As a trade that reflects various aspects of culture, cultural industries disseminate values, lifestyle and way of life to the targeted audience. As part of creative content, animation can also, serve as a potential platform for the establishment of national identity. Animation comes in various forms. They exist in live-action films, advertisements, corporate videos, video games and also, fully animated films and television series. Animation may also, appear in the form of moving text, objects, drawings and computer-generated images. The definition of animation has become less clear over the years because of the changes that have occurred in terms of how animation is used. A loose definition of animation in one of the earliest attempts to study the nature of animation. He explained the general acceptance towards the definition of animation films as being created on a frame-by-frame basis. This definition is similar to the suggestion of Wells in which Wells suggested that animation was more of a hand rather than a photographic job but maintained the frame-by-frame approach. Animation is a term which makes us recollect the funny cartoons, ferocious characters, imitation of real world people and magical styles of text flowing which made us laugh and enjoy the beauty of creativity.

Animation is a powerful communications tool which unconsciously places many people in a suggestible state, further reinforcing the need for critical reasoning in

education. In addition, to the elements of entertainment, animated works these children gave the application values to society through the characters and the plot order capable of positive impact in particular to children, for example, the animation drama series Upin Ipin and derivative Le's Copaque

**Definition of character design in animation:** Besides a good storyline, animation must have a strong character design with a good personality, appropriate costumes and accessories. Character animation is a craft of projecting the illusion of human life through acting. Although, the character that is being animated may not be a human, it will behave and act just like a human would. The objective is to make the audience believe that the character can think like a human. The animators need to have acting skills to achieve the best result. Creature animation is a craft of mimicking the behaviour and the locomotion of animals. The character cannot think the way human does. Its movement would also, resemble animals, especially, when it has a multi-limb locomotion or wings. Creature animators are skillful at animating creatures such as beasts, monsters, animals and non-extra-terrestrial aliens. An understanding of animal locomotion and anatomy is required to animate creatures properly. Generic animation is all about projectiles, object dynamics and machine (artificial mechanism) movements. Generic animators animate things like aeroplanes, spacecraft, ships, yacht, factory machines, gears, engines, etc. The movements are simpler and no anatomy understandings are required to animate. However, the animators must learn the dynamics of real-world objects, so that, the result will look realistic and convincing. "We look at a person and immediately a certain impression of his character forms itself in us". The idea that specific traits can be attributed to an individual only by their appearance has been made clear in previous studies. Whether, we like it or not, a person's physical appearance activates expectations of other qualities in that person: how they are likely to behave or not behave what attitudes and opinions they are likely to have, etc. This kind of cognitive bias may not be fair but it becomes a great asset for a character designer.

Character designer David Colman talks about the who versus the what in his media collection on the Art of Character Design Vol. 1. This refers to that a character designer should not only focus on what the character is to focus on the actual design of the subject. Nor should they only focus on who the character is which would mean that the character depicts a lot of personality. It is essential to combine the physical traits with the narrative and vice versa to show the viewer who the character is.

The who and what are both equally important traits in character design. The key is to first get to know and understand who the character is and then bring that out in the design.

The face is the primary channel to express the emotion of a person but a lot can be said in the posture and body language. The facial expression is really secondary to the body expression and should primarily re-enforce what is going on in the rest of the body. A clear silhouette of a character can communicate both personality and emotion even without a face. Hands are also an effective way of communicating a personality through body language because they can be very expressive and allow for a clear way to show certain personality traits in a silhouette.

**Definition of culture in animation:** The definition of culture is difficult to define because culture is ubiquitous, multidimensional, complex and all-pervasive. The reality of culture is a very complex term. Different people have defined culture differently but all share one detail in common which states that culture is 'learned'. In terms of substantiality, culture has been maintained throughout specific means, i.e., food, traditional clothing, religion. Elsewhere, it gets difficult to identify. In order to identify the cultural origins in animation films and series, one has to observe the source location of where or for whom an animation is produced and cross-reference the characteristics of the animation with its local culture. This approach is similar to the works found in Stephenson, Wells, Napier and Poitras and many others.

The element of culture is aimed to be preserved the way they are thus, maintaining the status quo of their origins. The growth and increased range of available local and Foreign media content have raised numerous questions as to the impact and effects it brings towards culture. As a mature international industry and a rapidly growing local one, animations films have taken a role in introducing the cultural characteristics of various nations and backgrounds. Similar with other products of different geographical sources, animation carries a reflection of their respective cultural background (Omar and Ishak, 2011).

**Literature review:** In traditional animation, animators will draw images on a transparent piece of paper fitted on a peg using a colored pencil, one frame at the time. Animators will usually do test animations with very rough characters to see how many frames they would need to draw for the action to be properly perceived. Timing is extremely important in traditional animation, since, the frames has to fit the soundtracks exactly as such the

animation process of traditional animation can be lengthy and costly. Once the clean-up and in-between are complete, the production would step over to photographing each individual frame. According to Matt Groening, there's always room out there for the hand-drawn image. I personally like the imperfection of hand drawing as opposed to the slick look of computer animation. Animation is different from other parts. Its language is the language of caricature. Our most difficult job was to develop the cartoon's unnatural but seemingly natural anatomy, for humans and animals.

Japanese animation techniques changed and by the 1950's Japanese anime hit its stride. New techniques for drawing and movement in animation were developed helping to make Japanese anime more distinct. During the production of animation cartoonists draw the cartoons and they are transferred to a cartoon cel that is used to create the illusion of movement. There are two kinds of movements common in cel animation, known as drawing movements and moving drawings. Drawing movements is common in traditional cel animation that strives for full animation. The latter has limited animation techniques common in anime. Much of the work done in these early years was not the cel animation technique that would come to be the dominant production technique but a host of other methods: chalkboard drawings, painting directly on the film, paper cut-outs and so on. One by one, many of the technologies used today were added to Japanese animated production sound (and eventually color), the multiplane camera system and cel animation. But due to the rise of Japanese nationalism and the start of World War II, most of the animated productions created from the 1930's on were not popular entertainments but instead were either commercially-oriented or government propaganda of one type or another Miyazaki's used a traditional style of animation where each frame was drawn by hand. Despite the increasing use and popularity of CGI (computer generated images), for animation, he still used pen and paper as the foundation, right up to his latest feature.

In an interview with Roger Ebert, according to, Miyazaki explained his animation process, "We take [handmade] cell animation and digitize it in order to enrich the visual look but everything starts with the human hand drawing. And the color standard is dictated by the background. We don't make up a color on the computer." With CGI in both 2D and 3D animation, animators work almost exclusively on the computer, from digital tablets and drawing programs to sophisticated banks of computers to render complex lighting, motion and 3D imagery. Miyazaki preferred a hands-on approach to his

animations. This way he felt had control of everything on the screen while allowing him to have an incredible amount of detail in each frame. When watching a Miyazaki film, pause it and examine the frame like a painting. The amount of detail in the frame will become clear using the painter's eye, rather than whether or not the CGI artist has elected to have the computer render a particular area of the image.

Considering that he maintained that tradition all the way through the production of his latest and sadly, last film, he was preserving a dying practice. He accepts the fact that traditional animation is on its way out at least for the production of large scale studio projects. Animation, however is not going anywhere. Traditional animation will still be used, though probably not in the large scale that Miyazaki has done. Digital 2D animation products for commercial and amateur use such as Toon Boom Studio, Anime Studio and others, rely on foundational knowledge of the fundamentals of hand-drawn animation. Miyazaki's art and works will be an inspiration and guide for many animators to come.

The animation industry in Malaysia received some attention from the government with plans for rapidly modernising the country. This extended to the use of digital technology in production houses which later predominantly introduced the direct-to-system method of drawing into the computer. As time flies, the process has changed with technology transitioning from manually hand-drawn art to digitalized version in 2-Dimensional (2D) with the first CGI-animation series titled ReBoot in 1994. This was followed by 3-Dimensional (3D) animation for the Toy Story movie in 1998. The first 3D animation efforts in Malaysia were the year 2000 film "Nien Resurrection" and an episode of the series "Skyland". However, in the late 1990's, 3D animation element was already included in the Keluang Man animation series. This era also, saw an increase in efforts to aggressively promote locally-produced animation efforts. Since, the year 2000, the Malaysian animation industry has gone far globally when Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) produced Saladin: the animated series Al Jazeera Children's Channel. Since, then, many Malaysian animation companies marketed their researches globally. Their animation has succeeded in promoting Malaysia globally by creating content that was based on Malaysian culture but having universal values. A 3D animator is an artist who creates animation using film, video, computers or other electronic tools and media for use in products or creations such as computer games, movies, music videos and commercials. As the use of complex and photorealistic 3D animation increases in the video game and movie industries, the demand for skilled 3D animator continues to grow.

**Character design-Japanese:** The anime director and manga artist Hayao Miyazaki believes that manga has a strong influence on the anime industry: “Japanese anime make manga into anime, use character designs of manga, absorb the vitality of manga and are made by staff members who wanted to be manga writers” As Miyazaki (ibid.) points out, this stilted, slowing down of motion was overcome through incorporating manga techniques. Japanese animation started when we gave up moving. That was made possible by introducing the methods of manga including gekiga. The technique of cel anime was suited to obvious impacts and it was designed, so that, the viewers would see nothing but powerfulness, coolness and cuteness. Instead of putting life into a character with gestures or facial expressions, character design was required to express all the charm of the character with just one picture. Anime is not the Disney animation with fairy tales and happy endings and sidekick animal buddies where the characters are never confronted with difficult situations and almost never die. Japanese anime often features real life issues such as death, sexuality and violence. Characters do not live happily ever after, bad things happen to good characters and villains often go unpunished and escape. The next section looks at some more of the literature on anime and cultural values.

Japanese animation works focus more on the small and exquisite characteristics of the works and furthermore, the meticulous Japanese culture is also, the peculiarity of Japanese animation. Generally speaking, the characteristics of Japanese animation can be generalized as follows exquisite painting, meticulous role, modeling and scene design, resorting to hyper-reality imagination space to satisfy illusion of the audience to realize what is impossible and impaling the imaginary nerve of the audience. In the aspect of character roles, most heroes have a fine figure of a man, handsome and most heroines are with long hair, oval face, exaggerated big eyes and a similarly exaggerated small nose as well as a beautiful build. For example, considering all aspects of life such as Japanese costume, food and drink, tea-making, product design and performance art and also, the latest film “Doraemon” (Fig. 2) visualize the fact that Japanese people concentrate on exquisite and meticulous culture which in turn is reflected in creation of its animation. Having been popular for several decades, this film can well reflect such an issue that is still widely and well received. This works mainly narrates a machinery cat called Doraemon who comes from the 22nd century and entrusted by its master, employs a lot of mysterious props in the future to help its master Mahavira back in the 20th century.



Fig. 2: Doraemon lifestyle icons

Characters are typically very easy to recognize like Sailor Moon, Dragon Ball Z, Voltron, Gundam Wing, Speed Racer, Digimon and the ever, so, popular Pokemon. In most cases they have bizarre character designs female characters with beautiful round eyes, hair that is incredibly big and gorgeous figure and physique. Male characters would usually have enormously huge muscles (as seen in Dragon Ball Z and GT), powerful bodies and maybe, on occasion have gigantic robots as seen in cartoons like Robotech and Gundam Wing. They are typically tall and slender and have almost stylized bodies. Many appear to be Japanese or at least Asian in appearance but a number of the more popular characters are decidedly Western, often with blue eyes and blonde hair.

**Japanese culture:** Japanese animation unabashedly defines the colloquialism “thinking outside the box”. This isn’t because they show physics-breaking giant mecha on screen that’s just shallow. What I’m talking about is high-concept shows that dance on the edge of reality and push us to view the world in new imaginative ways.

According to Frasier (2007), Japanese culture are best described as being formal and traditional, since, it is philosophical with documented history lasting more than 2,000 years.

Japanese animation firstly became popular in Japan but because of the common cultural background shared by Japan and most countries in Asia, Japanese animations soon gained popularity in other Asian countries as well. In United States, the most popular Japanese animations are mostly scientific fiction, adventures and actions, this difference is mainly because of the different cultural background.

The characters behave differently and things in general (houses, transportation, eating, sleeping, greeting and much, much more are a bit different from what you are used to some of the differences are because of strange artistic visions but most of the differences are a direct result of culture. Anime is an art form and as art, it

expresses many things about Japan and its people. The behavior of characters and the influence of religion are just a couple of the cultural aspects are covered in the history and culture section (Fig. 3).

**Character design-Malaysia:** According to Ghani (2015), 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. 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. 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. For example, in animation of Upin and Ipin, the character and narrative formation is not much about the concept of hero (Fig. 4) 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

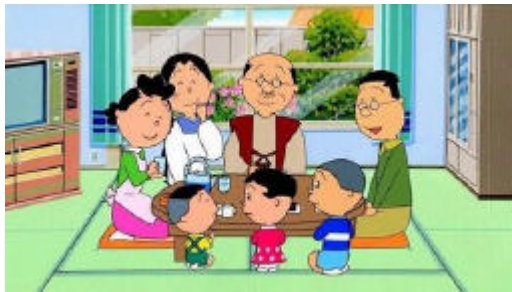


Fig. 3: Japanese Folklore culture



Fig. 4: Character design Upin Ipin Le’s Copaque

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.

**Malaysia culture:** Culture is part of human development which evolves with civilization from ancient times to today’s digital era. Animation contributes to the cultural industry through signs and symbols and is captured from people’s different lifestyle and various grounds including religion, belief systems, politics, tradition, language, tools, costumes, buildings and arts. Wayang Kulit or ‘Shadow Play’ was once a famed traditional culture in the 1960’s for entertainment purposes in Malaysia which fundamentally led to the continuation of the 2D and 3D animation studies.

As Upin and Ipin portrayed a more local environment, it provides an idea to various characteristics that defines the country that we live in. Hassan described how a number of student animation projects reflected the identity of Malaysia’s various races and heritage. According to him, there is no distinctive animation trend in Malaysia that can be considered unique or having a local identity. Hassan also did not specifically mention the cultural characteristics contained within Malaysian animation. Hence, it would be a strong justification towards studying how culture is portrayed in Malaysian animation (Fig. 5).

According to Ghani (2015) 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



Fig. 5: Malaysian Folklore culture, Le’s Copaque (Upin Ipin)



Fig. 6: Pixar’s story design model, from Cooper Hewitt’s exhibit

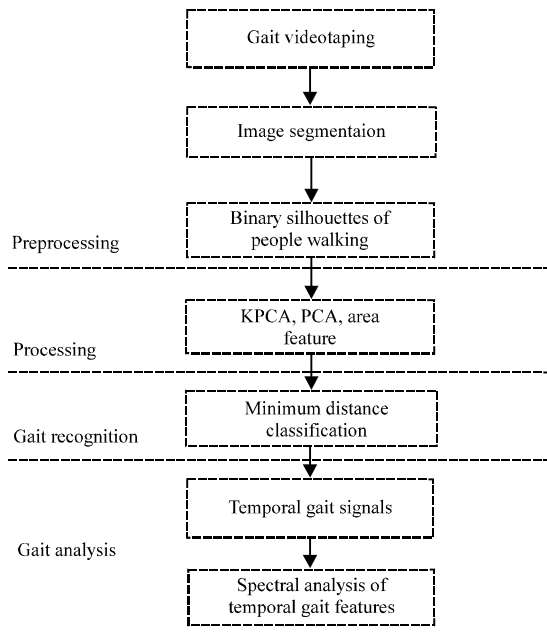


Fig. 7: Silhouette Scrapbook process

including Islamic values by providing the platform for harmonious relationship among different societies or groups or religious backgrounds.

**Narrative inside animation:** To develop a effective animated narrative, there several methods are available to be discuss. For example, lesson in story design from Pixar’s creative team. According to John Lasseter, every great story contains three foundational elements. It is start with a compelling narrative. Next is to develop memorable and appealing characters. Lastly is to create a believable world.

To cultivate these elements, we need a continuous cycle of research, collaboration and iteration that feeds

into every part of the story design. These actions take on different forms and formats depending on the type of element and the medium we’re using to tell we story (Fig. 6). The narratives must be simple and relevant for young viewers. This research develop method are available related to animation was used to analyze character design and culture from Malaysian and Japanese animation.

First research will gather and analyze information about character design and culture in animation (usually found scattered in literature). From Fig. 7, overall it represent the importance of narrative or storytelling in developing animation. The material is organized and analyzed in regards to its relevance for the development of project parameters and procedures toward solutions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Character design method:** These characters are extremely tangible, multi-dimensional and relatable. A professional character designer is required to propose a lot of design alternatives in order to fulfill the requirements for each project. Especially, in the fast-paced industry where one designer can jump from one project to another, a designer should be able to propose design ideas with a wide diversity of shapes. Creating character designs with a wide variety of shapes, especially, outside of one’s own preferred style is not an easy task. Design expertise necessary for that purpose is acquired from learning basic concepts, assimilating domain knowledge, inspection of established examples requiring years of practice and experience. At this point, it could be said that there are very few tools are available to support the process of character shape, exploration and ideation. Without identity, a character cannot be recognized or differentiated. Datuk Lat, a well-known local cartoonist, admitted that Malaysia is lacking a sense of identity in producing animation character design. Character design is the second most important criterion after the story line. The word ‘character’ is defined as personal.

The study investigates the topic of character design and its process. It is consequently divided into two parts. The first part revolves around investigation during which we have read literature on the subject of character design and looked into other material that is relevant to my study, e.g., an analysis of how various video games and animated movies use visual attributes, specifically shapes, to communicate different personality traits.

In the second part of the study, we have looked at a number of production pipelines that artists in the industry use, to learn more about how different artists approach the character design process and compiled my own process on this basis which is explained in this section.

**Silhouette:** Professional designers recommend character design methods using silhouettes. The ambiguous characters of silhouettes are supportive of idea stimulation with silhouettes. Therefore, designers are able to get clearer picture of overall character shapes. Design process (character design process included) consists of a sequence of activities. It starts with problem structuring and continues with problem solving. “Silhouette Scrapbook” will be placed on the design process between problem structuring and problem solving as shown in Fig. 7.

Silhouette thumbnails are among the most helpful and productive methods of design when it’s necessary to produce a large quantity of variations of concepts within a short period of time. It’s not a method used by all concept artist and it’s certainly not a necessity to design a creature or a character purely based off of a silhouette shape. That doesn’t go to say that all designers don’t subconsciously focus on shapes and designs that make a strong impact on the viewer. We often refer to a silhouette as a black outlined shape, much like a shadow. This doesn’t always need to be the case as a simple line sketch or simple shades of value can still provide the same effect and are just as efficient. Whether consciously or subconsciously, we are always designing through the use of interesting dominate shapes that work well together. One of the best ways to go about this is through the basic silhouette. Typically the use of this type of design is a pre-production phase of concept art that is generally, only seen by the artist or art director, if working on set or in-house. A lot of times when freelancing this stage of design isn’t shown to an art director and is merely a quick process of finding solutions and multiple designs for the artist eyes only. Silhouettes can be used in multiple methods of design from the abstract to the symmetrical and beyond. Whether we have it in mind to design a specific type of creature/character or something more abstract, we can begin the silhouette process by pasting down large black shapes on a 3/4 point of view or by mirroring shapes to be used in terms of a front, back or top down view. One of the best things about this quick design method is we don’t need to focus on hands, feet, fingers, eyes and all the little intricacies that take up time.

Proportions can be altered in infinite ways and they are especially, useful to create many various human-based characters. A character with a small head and a large body will communicate in an entirely different way compared to a character with a small body and a large head.

The research stage of character design refers to getting to know the character that is going to be developed because it is important to understand who the

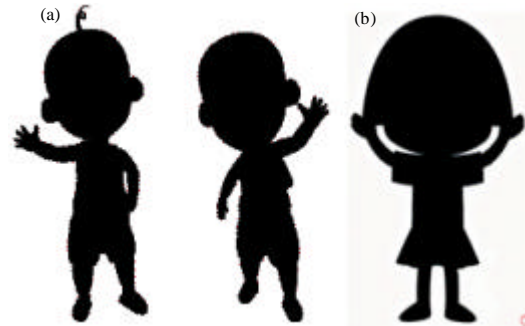


Fig. 8: a, b) A silhouette comparison Malaysian and Japanese animation of Upin Ipin and Chibi Maruko-chan

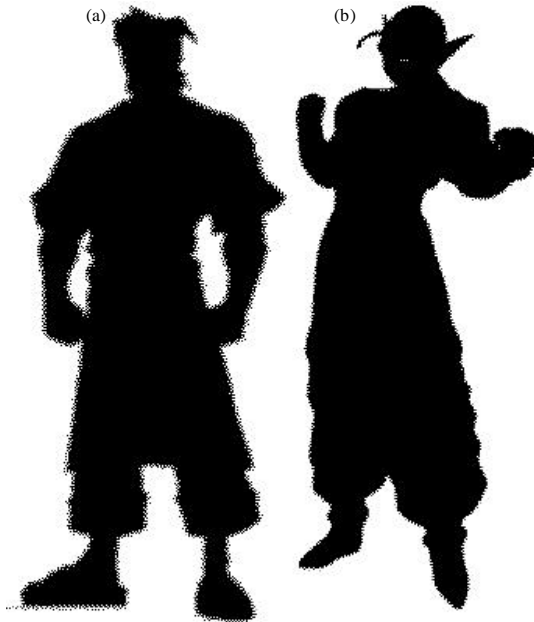


Fig. 9: a, b) A silhouette comparison Malaysian and Japanese animation of Piccolo, Dragon Ball and Lengkiu, Satria 7 Pahlawan

character is before putting the pencil to paper. There are plenty of questions that could be asked about the character in order to get to know them and it is important to keep the “why” in mind throughout the development process (Fig. 8 and 9).

From this, appropriate keywords are assigned to the character and adjectives are preferred over nouns as they return a larger variety of results. These keywords are then used to find references. Images that are categorized as either a personality trait or a visual cue, most of all images that inspire me. It took approximately 2 h for me to search for references but in the end, we decided to pick a maximum of four pictures for each character in Malaysia



and Japanese that, we felt represented the personality in general. In order to ensure that we were assessing characters in Malaysia and Japanese animation. For each character, we measured total height (heel to crown), head height (chin to crown), face width and interpupillary distance. To determine relative head size, we divided the head height by total height.

**Culture method:** According to Chambers (2012), Miyazaki, Osamu Tezuka, Isao Takahata and many other animators are responsible for bringing anime into the mainstream culture of America. Culture is slowly made by the involvement of an individual to build the development of the society. It cannot be seen in a single person or

individual but it can be seen in a group of people with the same characteristic and it becomes obvious or clearer in a society (Fig. 10). They need to tolerate in communication to show respect for the sake of living in harmony and a peaceful life based on these three senses of culture detected as an individual, group (Fig. 11),

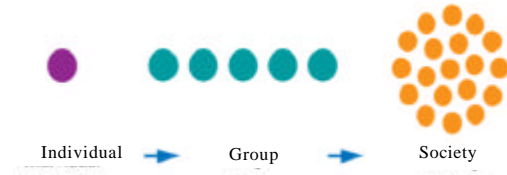


Fig. 10: Three senses of culture in character design

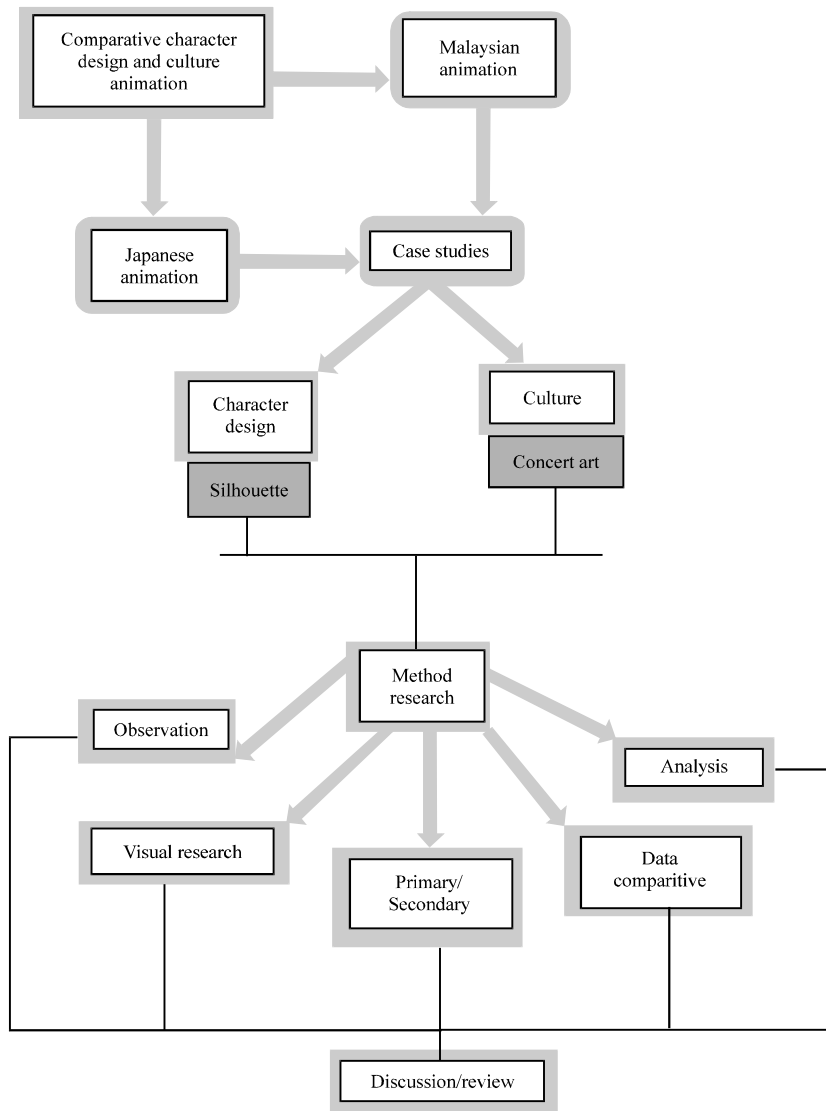


Fig. 11: Animation culture and character design model

a whole society. Cultural implication towards animation culture defines a specific way of life which represents meaning and values in art learning, institution and usual behavior.

Animation is basically the development of a storyline, character design, background and sound. Upin Ipin is one of the latest Malaysian animation that reflects local culture in terms of lifestyle and background environment. Unfortunately, students lack the sense of local identity through their final animation project. Thus, it makes Malaysian animation industry cloudy with the local character identity, plus can't even be compared with a successful Western and Japan animation.

Usop Sontorian was the first Malaysian animation series that reflect numerous ethnicities through the friendship of Chinese, Malay and Indian race. Likewise, *Kampung Boy* by Datuk Lat also, depicts the local identity through the village lifestyle, games, physical features and others. The storyline revolves around a village boy named Lat who is actually the main character himself. Except political matters, the story also, tells about his lifestyle in the village and the current issues that happened in Malaysia. This has become Lat's principle in making artwork. Signs and symbols in the cultural industry are reflections of people's lifestyle that can contribute to the establishments of national identity through animation.

**Proposed method:** Referring to Fig. 11, there are a few stages to consider as a production method in making research about comparative studies between Malaysian animation and Japanese animation. This figure was refer from Fig. 6 Pixar's story design model, from Cooper Hewitt's exhibit, Fig. 9. The RIBA and Goel Model from Vinod Goel and also, three senses of culture model base from Khalis and Mustaffa (2017) Fig. 10 provide implicit model design between Japanese and Malaysian animation visual styles. The significance of using this method is strongly related to the relationship model use in several local and Japanese animated series such as *Upin Ipin*, *Piccolo Lengkui*, *Satria 7 Pahlawan* as a example for character design (Khalis and Mustaffa, 2017). This research employed a qualitative approach to clarify the data collection before elaborating descriptively based on the findings of the analysis. A content analysis was conducted whereby two characters were selected from Malaysia and Japanese animation to analyze the characteristic differences and culture. Therefore, the artwork was analyzed using content analysis to see, if there were similarities influenced by the more prominent animations either from Malaysia or Japan.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Significance statement:** Animation is a craft that requires a heightened awareness of physical and emotional actions of people, animals, children, machines and anything else, we are trying to recreate. By adding observations of the surrounding world to the scenes will bring a sense of reality and subtlety that will make our characters come to life.

Imagine we are writing a term paper or research report on a subject that we know very little about. If writer write the paper without researching the subject it won't be as effective as it could have been, if you had spent the time learning about the topic. Unfortunately, many animators begin animating a scene in much the same way. They set keyframes almost blindly and relentlessly shape and reshape what they have already created until they get what they want. This not only results in poor and lifeless animation but will usually take a lot more time and effort to get it there.

As professional animators, we routinely choose from at least three different sources to get inspiration for the scenes we're beginning to animate. This first stage of creating a shot is one of the most critical parts of the entire animation process. We won't even think about setting keyframes until we've looked at some sort of reference. We generally reference from existing video of live action or animation, videotaped action of ourselves by observing the specific action we are looking for. In most cases it is a combination of all three of the techniques that give us a better idea of how to animate our scenes. In a recent interview with animation foundation, Bobby Beck had some great ideas about the importance of referencing and capturing the natural essence of people in an unspoiled form. He likes to set-up a video camera in a restaurant or public place and film people in these settings. Since, these people are not actors all of the movements are absolutely real and unrehearsed.

Let's create an example of how this process is put through its paces during an animated production. An animation supervisor assigns a shot involving a character watching an intense basketball game. The team he is rooting for has just scored a basket to win the game and our character is cheering with excitement. That's all we get, just a little back story and the characters motivation. We have to create the rest.

The first thing to do is sit down and think of films that have similar action. We prefer to look for a variety of sources including animation and live action from film and television. Animated resources are great for timings and exaggerated poses while live action often provides those

extra subtleties that are sometimes missed when we are just observing. Video also, allows us to break down an action that is moving faster than our eyes can perceive.

### **CONCLUSION**

The result found that there are physical differences between Malaysian and Japan characters and culture in representing the local identity, the differences create a uniqueness that contribute to the local identity in many ways including the animation industry through the process of developing character design and culture. Therefore, the similarities of Malaysian character found in the shape of the face, eyes, hair, nose, mouth, body and foot are considered as an influence.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank animation department lecturers at University Kuala Lumpur for all the support given throughout conducting this research.

### **REFERENCES**

- Chambers, S.N.I., 2012. Anime: From cult following to pop culture phenomenon. *Elon J. Undergraduate Res. Commun.*, 3: 94-101.
- Frasier, A.N., 2007. A clash of cultures: Cultural differences within American and Japanese Animation. MA Thesis, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas.
- Ghani, D.B.A., 2015. Upin & Ipin: Promoting Malaysian culture values through animation. *Hist. Commun. Soc.*, 20: 241-258.
- Khalis, F.M. and N. Mustaffa, 2017. Cultural inspirations towards Malaysian animation character design. *Komunikasi Malaysian J. Commun.*, 33: 487-501.
- Omar, A.M. and S.A. Ishak, 2011. Understanding culture through animation: From the world to Malaysia. *J. Media Malaysia*, 13: 1-9.
- Schodt, F.L., 1983. *Manga!Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics*. Kodansha Company, Tokyo, Japan, ISBN-13:978-4770010643, Pages: 260.