

UPIN & IPIN THROUGH PIAGET'S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

From the evaluation of the *Upin & Ipin*'s series through Piaget's theory of cognitive development and identification of their story and content, it can be assessed that the:

- i. Storyline is simple;
- ii. Dialogues used are short and simple, but proper
- iii. Combines various genres, themes and moral values in its storyline.

Storyline

Most of the *Upin & Ipin*'s stories centers around simple plots or small things that occur during one's childhood. But when it comes to a heavy story, such as earth pollution in episode 28, 29 and 30, Season 8 titled *Upin & Ipin Dan Ultraman* in 2014, the overview of the earth pollution will be minimised and scaled down to a child's perspective. This is important when it comes to a children's story. A child will never consider adult's problem as their problem and this is proven through the research made by Kaiser Family Foundation. As for earth pollution issues, Les' Copaque Production collaborated with Tsuburaya Productions Co. Ltd, a Japanese company who produced the *Ultraman* series. The appearance of a superhero *Ultraman* itself managed to engage the audience into the story but the main objective of the episode is to deliver the message. To achieve it, the story of *Upin & Ipin* must be told as simple as possible, yet fun and engaging from the children's point of view.

Using the concept of child's imagination of being part of Ultraman's life, Upin and Ipin play a role as rangers who work in the department to save planet Earth from any danger, which is eventually was just a hallucination. The story is about a day when planet Earth was attacked by a monster that is attracted to air pollution. The more smoke created by human, the stronger the monster will be. This is a simple concept introduced by *Upin & Ipin* to make children understand the consequence of pollution. A child has difficulty understanding heavy issues. But, when it is described in a simple way, children are able to understand the message. This storyline concept of keeping it as simple as possible is used in almost every episode of *Upin & Ipin* and is proven successful in helping children understand.

Dialogue

Dialogue is important in every story unless it is a silent movie. In *Upin & Ipin*, each dialogue, especially for the children's character such as Upin, Ipin, Mail, Mei Mei, Ehsan, Jarjit and other friends are constructed short and simple. No difficult vocabularies are used by these characters in order to make the characters realistic and relevant as a child will only speak in a very simple way using the familiar words around them. And the style of language is minimalist based on the grammar used. This may sound contradictory and inappropriate to the usage of the national language, Bahasa Melayu. To maintain the realistic speech of real life conversation, *Upin & Ipin* is willing to take a risk and maintain the daily conversation style in the series. However, this step is limited to where a dialogue may sound short as compared to complete sentences, but the usage of grammar is still in a proper way. The rules of grammar: subject and predicate in constructing a sentence are preserved well, including other grammar rules. Again, this is purposely constructed to make the proper local language sounded more attractive to children's ears and later, help them to memorize and learn the vocabulary.

Even though there are comments and feedbacks from parents say that the *Upin & Ipin* does not use proper language and parents are concerned that their children may not be able to speak in a correct language, the positive responses outweigh this negative aspect. Based on emails shared by Nur Naquyah Burhanuddin sent to Les' Copaque Production, some parents from foreign country mention that their child learns Bahasa Melayu through *Upin & Ipin*. Few classes teaching Bahasa Melayu for foreigners also used the *Upin & Ipin* as a reference in class to make the student understand the local language. This proved that technique of *Upin & Ipin* not only worked for local children but also children from international countries. It shows that the usage of dialogues in *Upin & Ipin* reflects the true culture and essence Malaysia.

Combination of Genre and Moral Values

Every story is based on a message that is conveyed to the audience. From a message, a particular story will be expanded in many fascinating ways to deliver that message. In *Upin & Ipin*, the basis story is a minimal issue. For an example, episode *Kembara Kecil-Kecilan* center on a story about gratitude. It teaches children to appreciate things that you have, because sometimes, we wish for things that are only beautiful at the beginning or the outside but the truth is actually ugly. Upin and Ipin think being tiny as an ant may ease them to do a lot of things, including escaping from Ros, their sister. But it turns out that, when they are tiny, many difficulties await them. To embrace this moral of values, the storyline needs to be drafted as engaging to attract children's interest. If the story only reflects the plot on moral values, it will lose its interest on the creativity part of children's interest. Children's interest is an element as Lesser introduced earlier: music and sound effects, repetition, surprise and incongruity, animation, action, humor, anticipation and diversity of programme elements. Therefore, the story of *Upin & Ipin* is usually combines these elements in an episode through genre and moral value.

In *Kembara Kecil-Kecilan*, genre fantasy is combined to gratitude moral value in order to make it more interesting, rather than a flat story of twins must appreciate what they have in their live. There are actions parts in the fantasy part where they become tiny and from there, the story teaches children that being tiny may seem fun for certain parts, but there are also consequences. The combination of this genre and moral value apparently grabs the children's interest on the fantasy part only, but since the fantasy element overshadowed the whole story, subconsciously the children or audience absorb the moral value throughout the story. This can be seen in episode 40, 41 and 42 from Season 7, titled *Boria Suka-Suka* in 2013. The story combines musical genre with an honorable message from UNICEF of love, respect and care for the women. *Boria Suka-Suka* manages to escape the cliché of a story to respect elders, especially women into the local songs from Penang, Boria. This combination plays a big role as a camouflage tool to hide the weaknesses parts of a story and may be applied to any style of storytelling.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to rationalise Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development in relation to the development of content for the *Upin & Ipin* series, whose viewership consists mainly of children. These findings have proven that children's development on televisual skills must be in line with their cognitive development. This is because children do not perceive television in the same way that adults do.

Age and linguistic maturity determine how a child will respond to and engage with television. According to Piaget's four stages of cognitive development, it can be applied to television experience. 2 – 7 years old children during the Pre-Operational stage are acquiring language. Thus, they develop representational thinking skills which allow them to talk about their experience of television. Between 7 - 12 years old, the Concrete Operational stage, children begin to engage in abstract thoughts which allow them to understand the medium's codes and conventions which enable them to follow storylines. They develop level of perception and is called as televisual literacy. Televisual literacy refers to allowing them to understand the chunks and segments that constitute a television programme and how they are linked.

Television programme can be beneficial to children. It can bring them into a contact with aspects of life they would not otherwise become aware of. It can provide a valuable tool at home and at school not simply to keep children occupied but also, if used appropriately, as a constructive way to use their time. Television is a channel through which a range of entertainment, drama and learning at the same time. This is what *Upin & Ipin* has an imprint on children's lives nowadays.

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