

# Representation of multicultural value in animation film Upin-Ipin season 6 “Ghost Month”

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## Abstract

In the era of advances in information technology, early childhood education can use various media, including film, which is considered a very effective means of conveying messages or ideologies with audio-visual power. The animated film Upin-Ipin, as one of the contestants in the arena of animated film ideology, has an important role in instilling moral values in children. Through the moral message conveyed through the film, the personality formation of young children can be aligned with the moral message conveyed. This study, which applies a qualitative research approach with library methods, uses primary and secondary data as sources of information. Observation and documentation techniques were used to collect data, while data analysis adopted Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis model. The results of the study show that the animated film Upin and Ipin presents multicultural values as part of their Islamic identity, which is reflected in their friendly relationships with characters such as Jarjit (of Indian descent) and Mei-mei (of Chinese descent). Despite coming from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, Upin-Ipin and their friends can interact harmoniously, creating an inclusive playing environment.

**Keywords :** Animation, Multicultural, Upin-Ipin

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of character education is a crucial aspect in efforts to develop national character, which must be placed as a top priority. Failure to develop this character could result in Indonesia once again suffering the fate of being a marginalized nation and becoming a less qualified workforce for other nations. (Sulistiyono, 2017). However, character development is not a simple thing to do, because humans are creatures capable of thinking (homosapien) who can consider and determine what should be done. Therefore, character education needs to be carried out from an early age. Early childhood is identified as the optimal period to stimulate individual development. To provide effective development efforts, it is necessary to understand children's development at this stage. Knowledge about early childhood development becomes the basis for adults in preparing various stimuli, approaches, strategies, methods, plans, as well as choosing appropriate media or educational games, in order to support children's holistic development according to the needs at each age stage. (Khaironi M, 2018).

Implementing multicultural education from childhood will lead to a high level of tolerance when they are adults and live in society, and will be able to create harmonious societal conditions despite diversity (Abdullah & Abdullah, 2018). There are many media and methods for educating children to build multiculturalism. Movies are one of them. Film is a mass communication medium which can be said to be an information medium as well as an entertaining art form, and has a strong method for educating or indoctrinating the audience (Ria S et al,

2023). Films as a combination of audio and visuals have a strong appeal and have a big impact on children to follow the story values contained in the film.

With advances in information technology, learning can now be held through various media, and one example is animated films (Hofmann, 2018). One of the animated films that is popular among children and adults is “Upin and Ipin” produced in Malaysia, which also received a positive reception in Indonesia. This film was broadcast through several media channels including television and YouTube. There are many animated films produced by various countries, but the animated film Upin-Ipin has distinctive characteristics that illustrate how tolerance and multiculturalism are reflected in the film. Upin and Ipin, as children of ethnic Malay descent who are Muslim, play with children their age who have different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds but can interact peacefully without distinguishing between each other.

This film, which was made using animation techniques, features children and adult characters, was produced with a backdrop of rural Malaysia, and was designed in language that is suitable for children, simple and easy to understand. The stories developed are adapted to children’s mindsets, depicting the simple life of village children, each of whom has their own unique character.

The animated film Upin-Ipin, which was officially released on September 14 2007 in Malaysia, is a work produced by Les’ Compaque and broadcast on TV9. This film has also been broadcast on various television stations in various countries, including Hilal TV and Disney Channel Asia, which includes countries such as Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Hong Kong and South Korea. When it was first screened, the main aim of this film was to provide education to children, especially to help them understand and experience the meaning of the holy month of Ramadan. The development of this animation project was carried out by Mohd Nizam Abdul Razak, Mohd Sofwan Abdul Karim, and Usamah Zaid, all of whom are alumni of Multimedia University Malaysia.

Malaysia, similar to Indonesia, is a country with a diverse society. The issue of multiculturalism continues to be a relevant issue in Malaysia. The composition of this country’s population includes three main ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians, as well as other smaller ethnic groups. Despite living in one society, each group tends to live a social life and operate in their own “compartment”. Although there are joint activities or festival celebrations, this does not necessarily reflect the adoption of values or overall unity among the groups, according to research by Yusof NM and Esmail in 2017. Instead, they are more inclined to maintain individual cultural traditions them, and conflicts often arise; one of the significant conflicts recorded occurred in 1969 related to primordialistic issues. Top of Form

Malaysia is considered an ‘ethnic salad’ and not a true melting pot in the concept of a multicultural society. Even though the government has tried to create unity among society by issuing the “1 Malaysia” policy, and encouraging “Unity in Diversity”, efforts to form a national identity still face obstacles and have not been completely successful. Ethnocentrism is still clearly built by the government and is usually exacerbated by racial stereotypes. Malays dominate the government structure while the other two ethnicities, Chinese (Chinese) and Indians do not get the same portion (Yusof NM and Esmail, 2017)

In an effort to create a multicultural society, the government utilizes visual media, especially animated films, as a means to educate and introduce cross-cultural understanding to the public. Upin-Ipin, among many animated films, is considered a medium that provides education, especially to children, about the importance of respecting each other, while showing that Islamic identity has a multicultural dimension. Individuals who adhere to Islam are made aware of the value of equality within the framework of equality, which is the main identity in the Islamic society that dominates most of Malaysian society. Through this Islamic identity, the concept of “Unity in diversity” increasingly reduces differences between ethnicities, religions and cultures.

This research aims to investigate how the Upin-Ipin series depicts multicultural education through visual and text elements in the film, with multiculturalism identified as Islamic identity. This film can easily be identified by its ethnic background through its characters. The concept of semiotics is used in this series to convey information about the characters through visual elements. Through this visual aspect, Upin and Ipin

portray themselves as members of the Malay tribe who adhere to Islam, are often seen wearing caps, and are active in reciting the Koran. Their friends, like Mei-me, clearly has a Chinese background that can be recognized by her clothing and the Chinese accent she uses. Meanwhile, characters like Jarjit, can be identified as being of Indian descent based on his distinctive hairstyle on the top of his head. Apart from the visual aspect, research also pays attention to interactions between characters in this series, as well as symbols that support multicultural representation as an Islamic identity.

The words used in the characters' conversations are simple and similar to the vocabulary generally used by children. However, what is interesting is the hidden meaning behind their conversation. A similar thing happened in Upin's older sister and grandmother's interactions with Upin and Ipin. When communicating with children, both older siblings and grandmothers lower the level of complexity of their speech to suit children's understanding. What is more essential is to understand the meaning implicit in the communicative interactions of older siblings and grandmothers when dealing with Upin and Ipin. Illustrations of the characters from the animated series Upin and Ipin can be found below. Top of Form



**Figur 1** Upin and Ipin series

The animated film Upin and Ipin has significant appeal as an educational tool for children, especially those aged 4-10 years. This film not only entertains all groups, but also aims to introduce the values of mutual respect and equality to children from an early age. In its presentation, this film integrates educational elements through everyday stories divided into several episodes, conveying positive messages through symbols and constructed narratives. Apart from providing entertainment that is easy to understand, this film also aims to teach values that can have a positive impact on the development of children's personalities and behavior through the visual and auditory experiences they gain through the film.

In conducting this research using qualitative methods, the Upin-Ipin animated series was analyzed using semiotic analysis tools developed by Roland Barthes. This analysis tool separates signs into two aspects, namely denotative and connotative. Apart from that, the method introduced by Charles Sander Peirce was also applied, which classifies signs based on their type into icons, indexes and symbols. The characters in the Upin-Ipin series, who represent various ethnic and religious backgrounds, are also analyzed using the semiotic concept framework of Charles Sander Peirce. The visualization of symbols will be assessed by considering the categories "icon," "index," and "symbol."

The animated film Upin-Ipin is one that is very popular among children, not only that, this film also received good reception from teenagers and even adults (R.S. Dewi, 2012). This animation is quite booming in Indonesia. The Upin and Ipin series has been broadcast several episodes on MNCTV every day. The Upin-Ipin Season 6 episode "Bulan Hantu" is considered representative of the study theme and is the focus of researchers to see and test whether the Upin-Ipin film represents multicultural values as an Islamic identity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

### **Upin and Ipin Movies**

Upin-Ipin is an animated series from Malaysia that tells the story of the lives of two 5 year old orphaned

twins. They live with their older sister named Kak Ros and their grandmother in Kampung Durian Runtuh. Initially started as a side project to help children better understand and celebrate the holy month of Ramadan and Idul Fitri in 2007. Upin-Ipin has now succeeded in becoming one of the most popular children's television shows, not only in Indonesia but also abroad. This series won various awards at national and international levels in the field of film. Upin-Ipin's success in attracting the attention of children and parents can be attributed to the many moral messages conveyed, the characters are entertaining and funny, and natural as children.

This film was produced amidst the ethnic, religious and cultural challenges faced by Malaysia. The political domination of the Malay ethnic group in government aroused feelings of jealousy from other ethnic groups such as Chinese and Indians. Efforts to achieve the vision of "1 Malaysia" and the concept of "unity in diversity" which is promoted in a multicultural society to form a "national identity" are considered as an approach that can integrate society as one unit regardless of differences in tradition and culture. However, these concepts are acknowledged to be difficult to realize (Yusof NM and Esmaeil, 2017).

The animated film Upin-Ipin, which has an Islamic teaching background, is here to teach moral values amidst the chaos of religious and ethnic issues. Malaysia, where Islam is the official religion which is strengthened through the contents of the Malaysian Constitution. This film enlightens its people that Islam teaches gentle, harmonious and universal behavior. (Prayogi, 2022). That Islam does not recognize exclusivity. Islam is a universal religion (Rahmatan lil 'alamin), a religion that prioritizes human values (Ukhuwah) which prioritizes equality in equality before God. The multicultural values displayed in the animated film Upin-Ipin show Islamic identity.

On September 14 2007, this animated film was first made by Mohd Nizam Bin Abdul Razak, Muhd Safwan Abdul Karim, and Usamah Zaid Bin Yasin, who are the owners of the Les' Copaque company. The three of them are students from Multimedia University Malaysia. Initially, the aim of producing this film was to provide teaching to children regarding preparation and appreciation for the holy month of Ramadan until the Eid al-Fitr holiday. Learning aspects such as worship during the fasting month, giving zakat, prayers during fasting, and similar topics. This film also depicts moral messages, explaining the values of friendship between children from different backgrounds, including differences in ethnicity, religion, race and class, as well as the values of tolerance and mutual respect.

The first part of this series tells the story of the Malaysian people's resistance to Japanese colonialism on the way to the country's independence. Meanwhile, the second segment of the Upin & Ipin animation also supports the promotion of the "1 Malaysia" concept by fostering a spirit of patriotism through appreciation for heroes' struggles and acceptance of various races and cultures without discrimination. The second series also reflects the practice of mutual cooperation, characterizing the Malaysian people's habit of fostering harmonious social relations as an effort to demonstrate the stability of the nation and state.

Another episode, such as the title "Diligently Saves Your Shopping Wisdom" tells how Upin and Ipin learned how and how difficult it is to earn pocket money. From selling vegetables to selling your own paintings. The money earned is saved for the future. The episode teaches that earning money is not easy. You have to work hard first, so that the money you get must be saved and used according to your needs, not based on your desires. Another Upin-Ipin series shows how Upin-Ipin and his friends, including Mey-mey, felt sad when they found out that their friend Susanti had to return to Indonesia as her home country because her father's duties in Malaysia had finished. Mey-mey burst into tears and left Susanti alone. This story shows the closeness that exists between the characters. Boundaries between ethnicity, religion, race and origin are no longer relevant. All these elements combine into one in an atmosphere of equality. Islamic identity is the background that creates unity in this film.

The Upin-Ipin animation is a show that shows diverse interactions in terms of ethnicity, religion and culture, thereby spreading an atmosphere of harmony and supporting national stability. In this animation, rural life is depicted as a peaceful, simple and togetherness environment. Therefore, there are close relations between various ethnicities such as Malays, Chinese and Indians, showing an attitude of respect for racial and cultural differences without discrimination. The depiction of everyday life in the Upin & Ipin animation has a positive impact in the form of developing mutual respect, respect and tolerance between the characters. This animation also reflects Islamic identity by showing sensitivity in accepting other people, respecting diversity, and

recognizing cultural diversity without any differences or discrimination. More than just entertainment, Upin & Ipin animation plays an active role in promoting moral values apart from Islamic identity.

The animated series "Upin and Ipin" plays an important role in providing moral education through its narrative full of ethical values. In each episode, this animation consistently conveys positive messages, teaching about friendship, cooperation, tolerance, and the values of honesty and responsibility. Through intelligent and entertaining stories, Upin and Ipin not only provide entertainment to the child audience, but also create space for learning moral values that can shape positive character in them. This approach creates harmony between education and entertainment, making this animation an effective means for shaping the morality of the younger generation. Several similar series are also broadcast in several media, including the Nusa series.

The animated series Nusa is a production work from the animation studio Little Giantz and 4Stripe Productions in Indonesia. Initially launched via the YouTube channel on November 20, 2018, in conjunction with the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW 1440 Hijriah. Within a week, Nusa gained significant popularity and became a trending topic on YouTube, giving this animation an abundance of views. Her success on YouTube then led Nusa to be broadcast on various television networks in Indonesia and Malaysia. Apart from the online version on YouTube, Nusa was also broadcast via television channels, the first time on NET. in 2019 during the month of Ramadan 1440 H, and then on Indosiar starting October 2019. In Malaysia, Astro Ceria, a pay channel, also broadcast Nusa in the same year. In the month of Ramadan 1441 H, this series was broadcast on Trans TV. Three years later, in the month of Ramadan 1444 H in 2023, Nusa will be broadcast again on RTV.

Nusa's animation production was carried out in response to the dynamics of competition and commodification related to Islamic values, which specifically focuses on the diversity of early childhood. In this context, Nusa plays a role in the process of competition and commodification as an effort to promote Islamic behavior in young children, with the aim that the Islamic practices represented in the animation can become an integral part of their daily lives.

Visual media has a big influence in shaping children's behavior patterns, where they tend to form characters and perspectives about themselves according to the characters that appear in the story. This finding was seen in research conducted by Bagus Mustakim on Serial Nusa. Mustakim concluded that the norms and piety obtained from Islamic teachings which are reflected in the character of the story character, Nusa, can shape the process of forming a child's personality with good morals and Islamic character that is maintained when they enter the maturity stage.

Upin and Ipin, as a pair of twins, have experienced the loss of their parents since childhood. Even though both of them have a high enthusiasm for playing and great curiosity, Upin and Ipin always show their obedience to the orders of their grandmother and older brother. Funny behavior and hilarious actions often color every episode, and even though their older brother sometimes seems strict, he really loves his two younger siblings. Apart from that, Upin and Ipin are also known as religious children, skilled in reciting the Koran, and diligent in reading the Koran. They sincerely help friends who need help. In the film, the values of equality between them are visible.

Upin and Ipin, as identical twins, are always together. Upin was born 3 minutes earlier, so he is considered the older of the two. Despite having almost identical faces as twins, the visual difference lies in their clothing. Upin wore a yellow t-shirt with the letter "U," while Ipin wore a blue t-shirt with the letter "I." Apart from that, Upin has a small ponytail on top of his head, while Ipin does not have a ponytail. Upin has a greater interest in computers and is known as a little scientist, while Ipin prefers fried chicken. Ipin has a more adorable nature and has a habit of speaking by repeating one word three times, for example, "right, right, right."

Sis Ros, who is the eldest sister of Upin and Ipin, is known as Jeanne Roselia Fadhullah. Even though he seems strict towards his younger siblings, actually Kak Ros really loves Upin and Ipin and often plays with them. Apart from living with Kak Ros, Upin and Ipin also share a house with their grandmother, known as Mak Uda. Mak Uda has a sincere heart and often takes care of Upin and Ipin with great affection. He is a very religious individual and always educates Upin and Ipin about religious values. Apart from that, Mak Uda also taught them

the concepts of multiculturalism, tolerance and the meaning of friendship.

### **Talent in Upin and Ipin Series**

Apart from Upin, Ipin, Kak Ros, and Opah, several characters who play roles in the Upin and Ipin series include Jarjit Singh, Mohammad Al Hafezzy (Fizi), Ehsan bin Azaruddin, Ehsan bin Azaruddin Susanti, Dzul and Ijat, Devi, Cik Gu Jasmin, Cikgu Melati, Nurul, Fathiah, Tok Da Lang, Uncle Muthu, Rajoo, Abang Salleh, Uncle Ah Tong, Azzarudin, Abang Hamzah, as well as several other characters who may not always appear in every episode. However, those mentioned above are the main characters in the Upin and Ipin series. Aspects of multiculturalism values are especially visible in the interactions between the characters above, especially in the episode "Ghost Month".

### **Multikultural Education**

Multicultural basically consists of two words, namely "multi" which means many, "culture" which refers to culture. Multicultural means many cultures. However, the meaning of multicultural is not that simple. According to Nadia Maher Ibrahim Moawad NMI, et.al (2017), Multiculturalism requires equality and its focal meaning is to include others. Similarly, sociological resources more often define multiculturalism as "a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society. Barakoska. A (2013) noticed that It pertains to the cultural variety stemming from the presence of multiple groups within a community where the perspectives and customs of individuals contribute to the development of a distinctive collective identity. Multiculturalism is a philosophy that is often referred to as an ideology that recognizes and desires equality in existing diversity or plurality. Ivatul (2021). In the context of multiculturalism, there is an understanding, appreciation and assessment of individual cultures, as well as respect and interest in the culture of other ethnic groups, and this becomes an ideology that recognizes and respects differences with equality both at the individual and cultural levels, Parsudi, (2002) . Meanwhile, Chang-You Hoon (2017) Multiculturalism seeks to resist cultural uniformity by recognizing the simultaneous and equitable presence of diverse cultures and populations within a nation-state. Similar to pluralism, multiculturalism advocates for the existence of ethnic and cultural variety. While both perspectives emphasize the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures, multiculturalism goes beyond this to address questions of citizenship rights, specifically how cultural groups can exercise their freedom of expression while also respecting the rights of other groups.

In the concept of multicultural education, Alismail (2016) stated that there are three types of multicultural pedagogy: conservative, liberal, and critical. Conservatives view multicultural education as a means of assimilating students into a larger society. Liberals aim to embrace diversity without questioning the established social structure. Critical multiculturalists view education as a tool to combat social inequalities influenced by racial, ethnic, and social class differences. Meanwhile, Multicultural education, as defined by Banks (2014), encompasses an educational reform movement and a process. It emphasizes that all students, irrespective of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural backgrounds, should have an equitable opportunity to learn in the educational system. This approach also explores how various factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, language, exceptionality, sexual orientation (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender [LGBT] individuals), and religion shape student learning and behavior. It further investigates the complex interactions between these variables and their impact on student behavior. With this context, we can accept differences with an attitude of complete tolerance. In short, the values of multicultural education consist of: (1) the value of mutual respect, (2) the value of democracy, (3) the value of tolerance, (4) the value of harmony, and (5) the value of justice and equality (a shared fate). If the concept of multiculturalism is implemented in Indonesia, the main basis for forming a multicultural society is the ideology of multiculturalism, which recognizes and respects differences with a level of equality, both at the individual and cultural levels.

H.A.R. Tilaar in Asmuri (2016) stated that multicultural education provides opportunities to

enrich understanding of four essential values: (1) respecting cultural diversity in society, (2) recognizing human dignity and human rights, (3) encouraging accountability towards the global community, and (4) promoting Human responsibility towards planet Earth.

In this research, to evaluate the values of multiculturalism as reflected in the animated series Upin and Ipin, the researcher used a reference or theory written by Ketut Suardika that these multicultural values include the values of multicultural education which consist of: (1) the value of mutual respect, (2) democratic values, (3) tolerance values, (4) harmony values, and (5) justice and equality values (shared fate).

These indicators are used to assess the level of conformity of multiculturalism values in the Upin and Ipin series. The interactions between characters in the series, both through verbal and non-verbal communication, will be assessed by referring to the values introduced by Ketut Suardika previously.

### **Mass Communication Theory**

Communication plays a crucial role in conveying knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for development. The significance of communication and storytelling has been deeply embedded in human society since ancient times, Sachin (2023). Film is a form of communication media that uses audio-visual elements to convey messages to a group of people gathered in a special place. According to Pratiwi DP (2023) Children's movies often convey moral lessons that contribute to the development of children's character. Similar to children's books, which are typically narrative texts, movies can be viewed as an additional medium for presenting story-building elements that are highly beneficial for shaping children's character.

Larisu (2022) stated that The utilization of films as an alternative educational tool is highly beneficial. With advancements in technology, films have become a significant source of information. Several studies, including theses and journals, have highlighted the valuable roles of films in education. These include exploring the correlation between films and Islamic principles, the impact of films on the education of children with disabilities, the use of documentary films as educational resources, and films as an innovative approach to enhance educational quality. Apart from that, films also have the potential to be an effective teaching tool for the audience, not just for entertainment purposes. By using images, dialogue and storylines, films are able to convey messages, ideas and campaigns directly, making them one of the best media for spreading any message.

### **Representation**

In her 2011 study, Caroline Howarth posited that Social Representation functions as a framework of shared values, concepts, and behaviors, facilitating mutual comprehension and discourse on parallel concerns. This construct further encompasses a subjective layer of interpretation, which engenders variations in comprehension, divergent textual interpretations, and consequent communication impetus. These representations can be characterized as hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional.

In the context of the animated film Upin-Ipin, verbal and non-verbal symbolism is used by the talents to represent their existence, including their ethnicity and religion. Interpersonal relationships, communication patterns, narration, and intonation in conversation are also used to express certain meanings. How they dress, what friendship system they build and the psychological relationships that appear in the film.

### **Semiotics**

The foundation of semiotics is the concept of signs, which encompasses not only language and communication systems formed by signs, but also everything connected with human thought, fundamentally consisting of these signs themselves. A semiotic approach is an approach with its own system, namely the sign system. Its aim is to interpret signs, both verbal and nonverbal. In the world of semiotics, there are several figures whose works serve as the theoretical foundation for their research. Among these figures is Charles Sander Peirce, who developed a triadic model of signs. Peirce (E.M. Griffin 2012) states that a sign has three components—object, representamen, and interpretant. Object: Something outside the sign that serves as its reference. This reference is often a physical object (a weapon), but it can also be an action (shooting) or an idea (self-defense).

Representamen: The vehicle or form of the sign. Similar to what Saussure called the signifier. Peirce often refers to the representamen as the sign. Interpretant: The meaning of the sign in the interpreter's mind. Similar to what Saussure called the signified. Other semiotic studies come from Roland Barthes, who developed a theory built on Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs as a correlation between signifier and signified. The extension of signifier and signified then has the meanings of denotation and connotation.

Roland Barthes expanded Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs as a correlation between signifier and signified through his work "Elements of Semiology." Barthes broadened the understanding of signifier and signified, which then have the meanings of denotation and connotation. In signs, Barthes distinguishes between two types of meanings: denotation as the literal meaning and connotation as the additional meaning formed by context and individual experience. Myths in modern culture illustrate how they use signs to convey certain messages, and how these messages can vary according to social and cultural contexts.

The animated film Upin and Ipin was analyzed using the concept presented by Charles Sander Peirces to see how the visuals and symbols in the film provide meaning. Meanwhile, Roland Barthes's concept will look at how words, both verbal and non-verbal, provide meaning, and ultimately these two concepts will look at the content of multicultural education in the animated film above.

## Research Method

This research looks at how the Upin and Ipin series represents multicultural ideology through the symbols in this series. These symbols are in the form of visuals and text (words) in each of their communications. To analyze the research object, the author uses several analytical tools. The tools of analysis are representation, multicultural values and semiotics.

This research applies a qualitative approach through the literature study method. The data sources used consist of primary and secondary data. Data is collected through observation techniques, which include direct observation, and documentation techniques, which include the collection and inclusion of documents, including images and individual works. In data analysis, this research adopts a semiotic approach which includes analysis of connotation and denotation according to Roland Barthes, as well as the concepts of icon, index and symbol according to Charles Sanders Peirce.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the episode "Month of Ghosts" season 6 of Upin and Ipin, the story begins with Upin and his friends having fun playing football on the field. While playing, Ijat managed to catch Upin's kick, but then fired a hard kick which sent the ball into a passing truck. The children chased the truck and managed to retrieve the ball after confronting Ah Tong's uncle.

Uncle Ah Tong invited Upin, Opah, and the others to watch Chinese opera that evening. Because their playmates, Fizi and Ehsan, had gone home, Upin, Ipin, and Mail finally went home. On their way home, they met Mei Mei, who was of Chinese descent, who was having difficulty carrying quite a lot of oranges in her basket. Upin and Ipin kindly helped Mei Mei bring oranges to Mei Mei's house.

From Mei Mei's story, they learned that this month was the Ghost Month in Chinese belief. After returning home, Upin and Ipin told Opah and Sis Ros their plans to watch Chinese opera that evening. Opah emphasized the importance of respecting other people's cultures. Upin also gave advice to Jarjit and Fizi to respect other people's culture by not running around.

That night, they all watched Chinese opera enthusiastically. Opah was very interested in the show and expressed his intention to watch it again if he had another opportunity.

## Visual Analysis

The Upin and Ipin animated series presents a uniqueness that cannot be found in other cartoon series. Its appeal is not only felt by children, but also by adults. This specialty lies in the variety of characters and talents



involved in the production. In this cartoon film, the characters presented reflect diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion and ethnic background. As previously explained, some of the characters who appear in this series involve Upin and Ipin, Opah, Kak Ros, Ehsan, Mail, Mei Mei, Jarjit, Fisi, Grandpa Tok Dalang, Uncle Ah Tong, Uncle Muthu, and a number of other characters.

The Upin and Ipin family, consisting of Opah, Kak Ros, and Upin and Ipin themselves, are Malaysian citizens with an authentic Malay ethnic background. The same thing applies to Ehsan, Fizi, and Mail, as mentioned by R.S. Dewi in 2012. They follow the Islamic religion, and every month of Ramadan, they diligently fast. Their Islamic aspect can be seen visually through the way they dress.



**Figure 2.** Upin and Ipin

The illustration above reflects the moment when Upin and Ipin were breaking their fast. The picture depicts Upin and Ipin in a prayer position before eating food. With palms raised upwards and wearing a cap, the image is symbolic. In accordance with the concept of symbols in Charles Sanders Pierce's theory, symbols here are signs that show the natural relationship between the signifier and the signified. Even though this relationship is arbitrary or has the character of a community convention, its meaning is understood or interpreted uniformly by the members of the community involved. Therefore, the symbol in this picture illustrates that Upin and Ipin are two children who are Muslim. The peci they wear become a symbol that can be understood together, indicating their Islamic identity.

The analytical method used above is an application of the representation theory proposed by Howarth (2011), where representation refers to the process of interpreting a symbol that is understood by a group or society. In the picture above, the upward hand gesture and the wearing of a cap are symbols that are jointly accepted by Malaysia and Indonesia, showing that these symbols are representations of Islam. Malaysian and Indonesian people will interpret that Upin and Ipin's images reflect their Islamic beliefs. The same thing applies to Opah, where the hair covering (hijab) which is similar to a cap for men is also a symbol that the woman who wears the hair covering adheres to Islam. The hair covering worn by Opah is a representation that Opah is a Muslim.



**Figure 3.** Opah with Islamic attributes



**Figure 4.** Opah, kak Ros, Upin and Ipin and some friends

The image above represents each person in the image element. The images of Upin and Ipin and Opah have been described in the previous presentation. Mei-Mei, as in the picture above, appears to be a little girl with white skin, narrow eyes, wearing typical Chinese clothes. In the same context of Representation theory, the little girl with white skin, narrow eyes and the style of her clothes is a symbol that represents that Mei-Mei is a girl of Chinese descent. The physical characteristic of narrow eyes is typical of the Chinese people. Likewise, Jarjit's figure is as shown in the picture below. The figure of a dark-skinned boy with his hair tied on top of his head is a symbol of Indian ethnic descent. In his appearances in episodes of this film series, Jarjit often wears typical Indian clothes. Likewise, Uncle Ah Tong has narrow eyes which are enhanced by the glasses he wears and the clothes he wears. It is easy to understand that the style of trousers and shirt he is wearing is typical Chinese ethnic clothing. Clothes with models like those in the picture below are a symbol of Chinese ethnicity.



**Figure 5** Jarjit and Ah Tong show their own identity

There are several other characters in the animated film Upin and Ipin who have different cultural, ethnic and religious identities. However, in this study each figure was not examined one by one. Examples can be taken of Uncle Muthu, who is of Indian descent, grandfather Tok Dalang, who is of Malay descent and converted to Islam. Likewise, Cik Gu always wears a headscarf every time she teaches. The head scarf is a representation of Islam.

In this film, all the characters depict the lives of village children in Malaysia, which consists of three ethnic groups. There is no visible dominance of certain ethnic groups or a majority-minority imbalance. Even though the life of village people looks simple, this film shows how awareness of equality and equality is reflected from children to adults. Differences in culture, ethnic background and religion are not a problem, and cross-cultural communication seems to run smoothly. The characteristics of multicultural awareness are manifested in the language and behavior of each character in each film series

**Naration analysis**

In the visual analysis described previously, a description of the characters that appear in the animated film Upin and Ipin has been given. The symbols worn or attached to these characters have their own meaning. They represent a group of people living in a particular village, a place where various ethnicities, religions and cultures exist together. Furthermore, the next review will examine how this cross-cultural communication can be interpreted when analyzed from the perspective of multiculturalism as an Islamic identity.

This study of cross-cultural communication is seen through narratives of conversations between talents involved in the communication process. These narratives were analyzed using Roland Barthes' theoretical approach, how the narrative has denotative, connotative and mythical meaning to the characters in it.

The multicultural values contained in the animated film Upin and Ipin can be found in one of the Season 6 episodes entitled "Bulan Hantu". This story tells of the moment when Upin and Ipin and their friends played soccer. While playing football, they learn that in the evening there will be a Chinese opera performance on their field. After playing football, Upin and Ipin met Mei-Mei who was in a hurry carrying a number of oranges. The basket of oranges that Mei-Mei was carrying spilled on the road, and finally, Upin and Ipin gave their help by helping carry the oranges. The dialogue between them reflects awareness of multicultural values.

a. Values of harmony and justice and equality

**Table 1.** Dialog 1

Seq	Conversation	Explanation
37	Upin, Ipin Hi Mei-Mei	
38	Mei-mei Hi Upin Ipin	
39	Upin There's lots of food. Let's play cooking.	Upin invited Mei-Mei to play cooking because he saw Mei-Mei bringing a lot of food
40	Mei-Mei I can't, I'm in a hurry. This is very heavy. Let's get out of the way	Mai seemed to be in a hurry dragging a basket of fruit.
41	Upin what's wrong with her ?	Upin, Ipin wonders why Mei-Mei seems to be in a hurry. And they finally saw that the fruit that Mei-mei brought in the basket had spilled.
42	Mei-Mei Oh my, the oranges are all over the place. Please collect	Mei-Mei asked Upin, Ipin for help to collect the spilled oranges scattered on the road
43	Ipin Uh..uh..	Upin collected the spilled oranges and then put them on Ipin's hand until Ipin's hand couldn't fit any more (it looked like Upin was deliberately tricking Ipin), and Ipin himself only carried one orange.
44	Mei-Mei Put in here	Mei-Mei asked Upin, Ipin to put the oranges in her basket
45	Upin Don't worry, I'll bring it	Upin acted like he was a hero who brought the spilled oranges, when in fact it was Ipin who brought the oranges.
46	Mei-Mei Ohh..alright	

The denotative meaning of the conversation between the characters Upin, Ipin and Mei Mei. Upin's character says the phrase "calm down, let me bring it" has a denotative meaning, namely Upin saying, "calm down, let me bring it". In the next dialogue, Mei-Mei's words "ohh..alright" have a denotative meaning, namely Mei-Mei says "ohh..alright".

**Conotative meaning**

The connotative meaning of Upin’s character’s conversation is saying the sentence “don’t worry, let me bring it”. It is emphasized that Upin, as Mei Mei’s friend, intends to make Mei Mei calm because he will help her by bringing the spilled oranges to her house. Upin and Ipin did this because they saw Mei Mei looking rushed and afraid until Mei Mei walked quickly while carrying quite a lot of oranges. In his hurry the oranges he was carrying spilled on the road. This made Mei Mei look even more uneasy. This is the key, why Upin emphasized to Mei Mei to calm down because he would help carry the oranges to her house.

The next conversation was Mei Mei’s response to accepting Upin and Ipin’s help by bringing some of the oranges that had spilled on the road by saying “oh...okay”. It appears in the dialogue that Mei Mei feels comfortable with the help provided by Upin and Ipin. As friends, Mei Mei has full trust in these two friends. Without hiding it, Mei Mei explained that this month was a ghost month, so she couldn’t come home late, and she couldn’t travel alone. he explained why he seemed to be in a hurry. Mei-Mei explained that this month was a ghost month without hesitation even though she knew that Upin and Ipin were ethnic Malays and Muslim. This happened because Mei Mei felt that their friendship never involved elements of ethnicity. Mei Mei felt that the friendship they built was sincere and pure as fellow citizens. Likewise with Upin and Ipin. They sincerely help Mei Mei who is having difficulties.

Starting with several oranges spilling on the street, Mei-mei straightforwardly asked Upin and Ipin for help by saying “Oh my gosh, the oranges are scattered. Please collect.” It was apparent in the conversation that between Upin, Ipin and Mei-mei there were no boundaries/gaps due to differences in ethnicity or religion. The film depicts friends as friends. This shows the value of multiculturalism, namely harmony, justice and equality. The relationship between the three children above appears harmonious, close as friends, with no visible differences due to differences in identity. On the other hand, Mei-mei will not ask Upin and Ipin for help to pick up the spilled oranges if Mei-mei feels that she is different from Upin and Ipin, that she is of Chinese ethnic descent while Upin and Ipin are of Melalu ethnic descent. But that wasn’t the case, Mei-mei lightly asked Upin and Ipin for help. Likewise, Upin and Ipin provided their assistance lightly without seeing or feeling that Mei-mei came from the Chinese tribe.

**Myth**

The myth of Upin’s character’s dialogue is “calm down, let me bring it” and is continued with Mei Mei’s character saying “ohh..okay”. From this dialogue it appears that Upin as a boy must protect girls. He saw that Mei Mei was struggling to carry her luggage which was oranges. As a man he must provide protection for women. Upin, whose religious background is different from Mei Mei, respects what Mei Mei, who is Confucian, believes in. Regardless of what Mei Mei believed to be Chinese people who embraced Confucianism, Upin and Ipin still helped Mei Mei as their friends. Upin and Ipin did not distance themselves from Mei Mei. Intercultural interactions show equality and equality, without distinction between ethnicity, race or religion. That they are like a family.

**b. The value of respect for morals and the value of brotherhood**

**Table. 2, dialog 2**

Seq	Conversation		Explanation
72	Ipin	Finally arrived	Kak Ros terkejut dengan melihat Upin dan Ipin datang dengan berlarian
73	Sis Ros	Ada apa ini	
74	Upin	Kakak tahu tidak ini bulan apa	Kak Ros was surprised to see Upin and Ipin coming while running
75	Upin, Ipin	You don’t know	Upin Ipin mocked kak Ros

76	Upin	This is a ghost month	
77	Sis Ros	Yes, they like to catch children who play a lot till they forget to go home like you, event if they are balt	Kak Ros, with her bitchy style (but still loves Upin and Ipin) is angry with Upin and Ipin, but still flirts.
78	Upin	Ah... you're finished. I still have hair	Upin pointed to Ipin who has no hair
79	Opah	Why are you talking about ghosts	
80	Upin	Grandma, is this really a ghost moon?	
81	Opah	Yes, that's right, based on Chinese belief, this month the doors of heaven and hell are opened. So all the dead come down to earth. So that's the reason this month is called the ghost month.	Opah explained to Upin and Ipin that for Chinese people, that month is a ghost month
82	Upin	Is that true, grandma ?	
83	Ipin	True, true, true. So there really is a ghost, Grandma	
84	Sis Ros	That's the Chinese belief. We must respect it. You are not allowed to take fruit from the prayer place on the side of the road.	Upin Ipin then remembered when they ran home from Mei-mei's house and on the road saw some fruit which they almost took, but because they were afraid someone called them, who they thought were ghosts (Dalang's grandfather called them)

### Denotative Meaning

The denotative meaning of the conversation between the characters Upin, Ipin, kak Ros and Opah. The character Opah utters the sentence "*Yes, that's right, according to Chinese belief, in this month the doors to heaven and hell are opened. So all the dead came down to earth. So that's the reason this moon is called the ghost moon.*" Then the next conversation "*That's the belief of the Chinese. We must respect it. You are not allowed to take fruit from the prayer place on the side of the road,*" has a denotative meaning, namely Opah which says, "*Yes, that's right, according to Chinese belief, in this month the doors to heaven and hell are opened. So all the dead came down to earth. So that's the reason this month is called the ghost month.*" The next denotative meaning is Ros's words, "*That's the belief of the Chinese. We must respect it. You must not take fruit from the prayer place on the side of the road.*"

### Conotative Meaning

The connotative meaning of the conversation of the character Opah is saying the sentence "*Yes, that's right, according to Chinese belief, in this month the doors to heaven and hell are opened. So all the dead came down to earth. So that's the reason this month is called the ghost month.*" It is emphasized that this month is a bad month. Everyone should be careful. You cannot be careless outside the house because the dead are descending to earth. The doors of heaven and hell are opened and dead people descend who can ultimately disturb humans on earth. The next words were like what kak Ros said, namely "*That's the belief of the Chinese. We must respect it. You are not allowed to take fruit from the prayer place on the side of*

*the road.*” This is an emphasis that everyone has their own beliefs. Trust is a person’s or human’s belief in something. Regardless of whether the belief is true or not, other people outside the community must respect it and participate in keeping that belief alive in the society/community that believes in it.

Sis Ros tries to provide multicultural education to her two younger siblings, Upin and Ipin, that people must respect each other without looking at differences, respect each other, tolerate each other. Fruits on the side of the road, according to Chinese beliefs, have their own meaning. No one can just take it. This Chinese belief must be accepted by people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. kak Ros tried to tell her two younger siblings that they had to be respectful and tolerant by not taking the fruit. Ros said, “That’s the belief of the Chinese. We have to respect it.” A very good multicultural lesson for children contained in the animated film Upin and Ipin.

**Myth**

Myth from the Opah character’s dialogue “Yes, it’s true, based on Chinese belief, in this month the doors to heaven and hell are opened. So all the dead came down to earth. So that’s the reason this month is called the ghost month” and continued with the character kak Ros who said “That’s the belief of the Chinese. We must respect it. You must not take fruit from the prayer place on the side of the road.” From this dialogue it appears that Opah as a parent wants to convey to Upin and Ipin that this month is not a good month. Many ghosts descended to earth. A ghost is a creature that is always depicted as evil. Because of this evil, humans must be careful of ghosts. Meanwhile, kak Ros said, “That’s the belief of the Chinese. We must respect it. You must not take fruit from the prayer place on the side of the road.” Kak Ros wants to emphasize that everyone must respect each other, respect each other. People should not underestimate other people, should not look down on other people, should not think that they are the most right, while other people are wrong. Respecting each other and respecting each other is a good way of life, a good way of socializing, in harmony without being hostile to each other. Peaceful harmony will make human life peaceful, while hostility will make human life miserable.

The dialogue above appears clear after being analyzed from the perspective of Roland Barthes with its denotation, connotation and myth. Opah understands the culture of other ethnic groups. Opah respects the traditions or beliefs of people of different ethnicities and religions. Opah even invited kak Ros and Upin and Ipin to see the Chinese Opera. Likewise, Ros’s invitation to respect this belief. He made this invitation verbally and addressed his younger siblings Upin and Ipin. Upin and Ipin’s reaction to seeing a Chinese opera performance with their brother and Opah was very positive. They were very happy. This indicates that Upin and Ipin also respect other people’s culture. Multicultural values of respect and morality are visible in their dialogues.

c. **The value of respect and ethics**

**Table 3. dialog 3**

Seq	Conversation	Explanation
124 Fizi, Jarjit	Where do you want to run?	Fizi chases Jarjit
125 Jarjit	You can’t possibly catch up to me	Fizi and Jarjit play chase
126 Mei-Mei	Why did you hit people, Fizi? my food is wasted	Fizi bumped into Ehsan until the food in her hand spilled
127 Jarjit	Common catch me..	
128 Fizi	Notice...	
129 Upin	You can’t run around here. Opahi said we have to be respectful	Upin reminded Fizi and Ehsan to respect the Chinese show by not running around.

130	Jarjit	What do you mean	
131	Upin	Ghost	Mei mei said "ghost"
132	Jarjit	Really	Jarjit was surprised and confused
133	Fizi	Really	
134	Mei-Mei	Come on, let's sit down	
135	Fizi	Come on..	They walked together to find a seat in the audience

### Denotative Meaning

The denotative meaning of the conversations of the characters Upin, Ipin, Fizi, Jarjit and Mei Mei. Upin's character says the sentence "*You can't run around here. Grandma said we have to be respectful*", has a denotative meaning, namely Upin said "*You can't run around here. Grandma said we have to be respectful.*"

### Conotative Meaning

The connotative meaning of Upin saying the sentence "You are not allowed to run around here. Grandma said we have to be respectful." It is emphasized that if Fizi and Jarjit run around at the Chinese opera event, they will be seen as not respecting other people's cultural traditions. As fellow citizens, Upin intends to invite Jarjit and Fizi to sit properly, not run around. That way they appreciate Chinese culture. Jarjit and Fizi, who at first did not understand how to give respect to other ethnic cultures, then realized their shortcomings, so they finally sat down well.

This film provides education in multicultural values for children who watch it. The dialogue and visuals created in the film Upin and Ipin are in simple language, the language spoken by children is very easy to understand. Upin and Ipin, as children who obey their parents, remind their friends to respect other people's cultures. Running around in front of the opera stage is seen as something that does not respect other people's cultures. The way to respect is to sit in the chair provided while waiting for the event to start.

### Myth

Myth from Upin's dialogue: "You can't run around here. Grandma said we have to be respectful." Upin's dialogue with Jarjit and Fizi shows that Upin invites Jarjit and Fizi to respect other cultures. By respecting, harmony between residents will be maintained. With mutual respect, each person does not interfere with others, there is no sense of who is the most powerful, who is dominant, there is no one who should submit to whom. Living in an atmosphere of togetherness and equality.

Multicultural values of mutual respect are also visible in the subsequent dialogues between Upin, Ipin, Mei Mei, Ehsan and Jarjit.

#### d. The Value of respect

**Table 4, dialog 4**

Seq	Conversation		Explanation
161	Mei-mei	Come here Upin	Upin and Ipin were still wandering around looking for separate chairs.
162	Mei-Mei	Where are they going	
163	Fizi	What's ever ..	Mei-Mei watched where Upin and Ipin would sit. And Upin, Ipin finally intends to occupy the seat that Mei-Mei was worried about

164	Mei-Mei	You can't sit there. Come over here	Mei-Mei pulled Upin's hand to the chair she mentioned.
165	Upin	But..why Mei-Mei	
166	Mei-Mei	You can't sit there. The seats are for ghost.	The visual shows Upin and Ipin's slightly frightened faces
167	Ipin	Haaa.... There is ghost again ?	
168	Upin	We have to be respectful. I told you so, right?	Upin and Ipin dan friends headed to the chairs mentioned.
169	Fizi	I told you so, right ?	
170	Kids	Looks like it's about to start	There was a lot of applause, the opera stage has begun. Two women are seen dancing. The audience seemed happy, entertained and even followed the movements of the dancers on stage. A few moments later, uncle Ah Tong's dancers appeared on stage

The chronology of the story above is as follows. After Upin and Ipin came from behind the stage, they walked towards the front row of seats which were not occupied by anyone else. They don't know that according to Chinese belief, this chair is a chair for ghosts. After they reached the row of chairs, Ipin immediately jumped to sit on the chair. Mei Mei, who saw this, immediately approached Upin and Ipin not to sit in that chair because that chair was for ghosts to sit on. After Mei Mei told him this, Upin said *"I told you, we have to be respectful, right?"*

Analogy with previous analyses, Upin and Ipin really respect other people's cultural traditions. They did something that was not good, it seemed like they were not respecting Chinese culture, but after Mei Mei told them what they were doing was not good and violated trust, Upin and Ipin did what was good and right with the intention of respecting other people's culture.

In ignorance, Upin and Ipin went to the chairs which Mei-mei later explained that these chairs were chairs where ghosts were. Mei-mei's explanation made Upin and Ipin understand. They then sat on the chairs indicated by Mei-mei. It can be seen in this scene that Upin respects other people's culture, they have a high understanding of tolerance, by sitting in a row of chairs together. This clearly shows that Upin and Ipin have a spirit of democracy, tolerance, the value of harmony and recognize that they are the same, equal and equal. Upin and Ipin do not feel that they, their tribe, are more powerful and more dominant.

## CONCLUSION

The animated film Upin and Ipin, with Upin and Ipin as the main characters, makes a significant contribution to conveying the values of multiculturalism. The story in this film not only entertains, but also educates the audience about cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. One of the main aspects that is worth noting is that this film takes inspiration from Islamic teachings as the background of the story.

Upin and Ipin, as the main characters, live their daily lives in a village that reflects a society consisting of various ethnicities, religions and cultures. Islamic teachings are the basis for the values held firmly by these characters, and this can be seen in various film scenes, such as their efforts to show concern and cooperation between ethnic groups.

Through the narrative presented, the film Upin and Ipin is able to illustrate that Islamic multicultural values are not just an addition, but are an integral part of Islamic identity itself. This film illustrates how different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds can live together in harmony, creating a community of mutual

Thus, the Upin and Ipin film is not just a colorful spectacle, but is also an effective medium in forming a



positive understanding of multiculturalism and strengthening Islamic identity in the context of diversity.

The conclusion of this research confirms that the animated film Upin and Ipin makes viewers, especially children, understand what similarities are, what differences are, what mutual respect and respect are. And that's multiculturalism in a simple way and as an Islamic identity

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