Walt Disney’s Movie Soundtracks as Media in Developing Character Education for Children

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ABSTRACT

As a medium of communication, a song has a great impact in children's development. A small number of children's songs generate children to sing adult songs, however, there are some adult songs which are not suitable to children in relation to lyrics and theme. The incomprehension of the lyrics and meaning existed in the song can be psychologically influential for the child's development. This study analyzes the role of Walt Disney's cartoon soundtracks for character education to children. This is a qualitative-descriptive research, taking observation and in-depth interview to 10 informants who have children of 7-11 years old in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The results stated that the soundtracks How Far I’ll Go and Let It Go bring positive characters in contents that are useful for character education. The character education taken from lyrics of the songs is conveyed and developed by vocabulary enrichment, discussion in easy-digested language, and storytelling. These require special time. The good changes in children's good characters happen by time and process. Therefore, character education needs to be continued and developed in different ways.

Keywords: character education; movie soundtrack; child development

Introduction

The development of technology and the increasing access to information and entertainment may lead children to be the targets of consumerism. Because of it, they are no longer seen as children who still need the assistance and supervision of their parents and the environment. This can be
seen from the passion of children singing adult's songs. Adult's songs are not suitable with mental development and character education of children. Most of adult songs contain words that are less appropriate for children. Different perception and meaning of lyrics may lead into negative impact on psychology and morale. This, then, can also permanently shape a different understanding of life. Zepe and Rosediana in Ardipal (2015) argue that this can happen because of limited number of children's songs, the influence of mass media, and the number of music producers who no longer produce children's songs.

At one side, technological advancement and English learning for children exist. Increasing access to communication media and technology with English content encourage parents to use it for the benefit of improving the English language skills of children. Some English children's songs such as If You're Happy and You Know It, Five Little Ducks, Marry Had a Little Lamb, and Old Mac Donald Had a Farm, are very easy to find or download by parents through the internet. Parents and children become easier at recognizing English vocabulary and practicing it in daily conversation. However, in another side, there are only limited numbers of children's songs. In fact, we should have more songs to be sources in teaching English and developing children character. This phenomenon takes a special concern for educators and parents.

In connection with the case above, the soundtrack of the Walt Disney cartoon movie is an interesting thing to talk about, especially when children love the soundtrack (songs) featured in the movie. From children's perception, the more a movie is good at animation, stories, and visuals, the more frequent they watch the movie and love the soundtracks. There are several soundtracks of Walt Disney Movie cartoon movies that are very popular, like Beauty and the Beast (Beauty and the Beast), Reflection (Mulan), Let it Go (Frozen), How Far I’ll Go (Moana), and A Whole New World (Aladdin). The soundtracks take children to sing and even memorize the lyrics. It is not surprising that the parents then provide facilities for them to access internet by YouTube and download the movie or soundtracks for them.

From the phenomenon above, the researchers carry a discussion on the following questions: is there any role of Walt Disney's movie soundtracks in supporting the character education to children? How can the soundtracks support a character education for children in Indonesia?

**Children's Songs in Indonesia**

In the 80s and 90s, various children’s songs appeared and were favored by children in Indonesia, such as “Du Di Dam” (Enno Lerian), “Abang Tukang Bakso” (Melisa), “Obok-obok” (Joshua), and “Jangan Marah” (Trio Kwek Kwek). These songs fit their age (Ardipal, 2015). In general, children songs are songs frequently sung by children, having themes like happiness, holiday, school activities, friends, nature, living spirit and being good children. Children’s song lyrics contain simple things that children usually do (Murtono & Murwani, in Ardipal, 2015).

Nowadays, children’s folk songs and the Indonesian ones do not attract children to sing and love. There is a tendency of enjoying internet that provides many things to see. Children are likely to love adult's songs than theirs. We can see this on a talent search or a singing competition for kids in some private televisions. More children love and enjoy singing adult's songs. In fact, adult's songs contain themes and words that are not suitable to children's mental development. This becomes a special concern when people see children singing a song of love, a broken heart, and an affair (infidelity). Adult’s songs have less suitable lyrics to be listened and understood by children. When they sing adult's songs, automatically the children's brains absorb and keep the words contained in the lyrics on their mind. It will come in to a danger when the children will begin to imagine the meaning of the lyrics (Muthmainnah, 2017: 138). If children are exposed to adult's songs without any control, this can psychologically have a negative impact that will affect their growth and development. This study is important for researchers to gain an understanding and outlook of the characters. Moreover, it can contribute on kinds of appropriate songs for children for character education.
The Influence of Music to the Development of Child Intelligence and Mentality

According to Merrid in Bhawono (2012: 3), music is a universal language, because music is something easy to be understood by everyone from any nation in this world. It cannot be denied that music has been around us since being in the womb of mother. Besides, music also has a very important role in human life. A language that is easily accepted and digested by the brain is the language of music, because that music has a natural composition. By listening to music, children will learn through the process of a pleasant experience that will result in a good impact in the development of brain and mental intelligence. In line with that, Arostiyani (2013) revealed children's activities in listening, singing, and expressing music have given a miracle of providing knowledge contained in the song lyrics.

In addition, Gruhn in Nuswantari and Astuti (2015), states that children need music as a means of rhythmic repetition and structured movement because they have a good sensitivity to music. Music also stimulates brain growth and activates brain connections. Furthermore, it is said that musical practice can also support motoric coordination. Music does not tend only to the development of the left brain but it makes the connections between left and right brain become strong. This is why a song is also one form of communication because it has a very big impact to the development of children.

The Role of Cartoon Movie Soundtrack in Character Education

Character education, according to Khan in Arostiyani (2013), is a process of activities carried out with all conscious power and efforts, and planned to direct the students. Character education is also a process of activity that leads to improving the quality of education and the development of a harmonious mind that always teaches, guides, and mentors every human being to have intellectual competence, character, and skills. In line with that definition, Lickona in Suyadi (2013: 6) states that character education includes three main elements. They are about knowing goodness, loving goodness, and doing good. Character education in children can then be performed through musical experience activities. Activities that can be taught include listening to music, singing, playing musical instruments, reading musical notes, following music for body movement, and appreciating learners in singing activities. Through the song, the child gains experience from the song lyrics he sang. It also reinforces the existing character as well as cultivating other characters. Kamtini and Tanjung in Nuswantari and Astuti (2015) stated that children can meet different social and emotional needs in music. This is in line with the Greimeyer study (Nuswantari and Astuti, 2015) which shows that music with pro-social lyrics can alleviate aggressive behavior.

Montessori mentions that each phase of child development has a biological significance. Montessori proposes four periods of development. Period I (0-7 years) is a period of capture (reception) and the arrangement of the outside world. Period II (7-12 years) is a period of building an abstract plan. Children begin to pay attention to morality and to judge something good and bad based on their conscience. Period III (12-18 years) is a period of self-discovery and sensitivity of social taste. The last, the period IV (18 - ...), is a period of higher education (Suryabrata, 2002: 188). Based on the description, children ranging from 0-12 years old are important in the development stage of the child. Both stages become more important when at the age of 12-18 years old, the children are in the period of development of his personality that must be aware of the necessities. In other words, Montessori’s second period is also a basic period of determining the stage of mental development because it is understood as a physical-spiritual manifestation in a sequential structure in obtaining the lessons (exercises) essential for proper formation. Therefore, education, according to Montessori, means realizing or implementing the plan of nature.

Children in Period II have experienced the influence of music for the development of cognitive, emotional and social intelligence. This then leads to how they give opinions about music in their daily lives. Rashid in Nuswantari and Astuti
received positive responses from those children. They claimed that the soundtracks are easy to listen. This made them easier to sing and follow the music and rhythm. It is not surprising that both songs are more memorable in children’s mind.

The next observation was about lyrics of the song. The researcher interpreted the song by analyzing it into sections before finally reviewing the whole content of songs that relate to character education. Furthermore, researchers conducted in-depth interviews about the role of the soundtracks in supporting of character education for Indonesian children. There are ten (10) parents as informants in this study. The analysis of the songs is as follows:

**How Far I’ll Go**

I’ve been standing at the edge of the water
Long as I can remember
Never really knowing why
I wish I could be the perfect daughter
But I come back to the water
No matter how hard I try
Every turn I take
Every trail I track
Every path I make
Every road leads back to the place I know
Where I cannot go
Where I long to be
See the line where the sky meets the sea
It calls me
No one knows how far it goes
If the wind in my sail on the sea stays behind me
One day I’ll know
If I go there’s just no telling how far I’ll go
I know everybody on this island
Seems so happy on this island
Everything is by design
I know everybody on this island
Has a role on this island
So maybe I can roll with mine
I can lead with pride
I can make us strong
I’ll be satisfied if I play along
But the voice inside sings a different song
What is wrong with me
See the light as it shines on the sea
It’s blinding

(2015) said that song is a media of delivering fun message for children. In relation with children’s period II, children play with songs and even learn with songs. Having a good method, they can get a new concept and knowledge about pro-social behavior that release boredom. In addition, Rosmiati in Tyasrinestu (2014: 163-164) stated that the children folksong’s lyrics can also help the formation of characters in early childhood. Children can feel the presence of music as a means to accompany them play. Therefore it is important for parents to provide assistance and introduce songs that are appropriate with children’s age.

Musical experience can obviously help children get characters (Arostiyani, 2013: 34). Children gain more experience from song lyrics they sing and it will reinforce the existing characters. In addition, it can cultivate good manners and characters.

This is a qualitative-descriptive research, taking observation and in-depth interviews for the methods. This study does not analyze the content of Walt Disney movie plots or stories that have been declared to be able to help children for good characters (Leeuw and Laan, 2018: 160). This research specifically focuses on the role of Walt Disney movie soundtracks in supporting character education of children. Researchers conducted early observation to the children about the most memorable and likable Walt Disney’s cartoon movie soundtracks in the last 3 years. Researchers help the children recall the songs by mentioning the title of the movie soundtrack productions from 2015-2018. This first observation was conducted to 10 (ten) children of 7-11 years old, 7 girls and 3 boys, in the region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The reason of choosing that age period is because they represent the development of Period II which has received the influence of music from an early age. This period is considered to have been able to use the senses and begin to pay attention to morals. They have also been able to judge something good and bad.

Based on this early observation there are 2 songs (soundtracks) that have the highest ranks in selecting song titles. The songs are Let it Go (from Frozen cartoon movie) and How Far I’ll Go (from Moana cartoon movie). Both songs
But no one knows how deep it goes
And it seems like it’s calling out to me
So come find me
And let me know
What’s beyond that line
Will I cross that line

The following is the interpretation of song
by sections.

I’ve been standing at the edge of the water
Long as I can remember
Never really knowing why
I wish I could be the perfect daughter
But I come back to the water
No matter how hard I try

This section expresses about the anxiety of a
girl who feels that she is not such a perfect child.
She feels a kind of confusion on how to be a good
girl. This is illustrated by her actions in staring at
the water and pondering about what she has done.
This section primarily describes about looking for
the ways to be someone better.

Every turn I take
Every trail I track
Every path I make
Every road leads back to the place I know
Where I cannot go
Where I long to be

This part reveals how he looks for the meaning
of life by going to anywhere she wants to go.
She expects much to find what she feels fine for her
life. Unfortunately, she does not find any answer.
Eventually, she comes back to where she has grown
up as it has already become part of her life.

See the light as it shines on the sea, It’s blinding
But no one knows how deep it goes
And it seems like it’s calling out to me
So come find me
And let me know
What’s beyond that line
Will I cross that line

This section illustrates how the child still has a
hope of becoming a good girl. She still wants to
get beyond the limit. There is something ideal
to achieve. She dreams of it. However, her great
dream makes her think of whether she can still
achieve the goals.

In general, the song that won the Grammy
Awards for Best Song Written for Visual Media
category in 2018 illustrates the character of a child
who experiences significant changes from negative
to positive, bad to good. From the lyrics analyzed, it
can be assumed that the main character is described
to be someone having doubt, uncertainty, even
fear. This is a child experiencing confusion about
how she lives to be a good girl. In addition, it is
also described that she is a figure who is looking
for the meaning of herself for others. She wants to be part of others, having such a role for people. In searching for this meaning of life she even goes away for undetermined ways. However, she finally returns back to the origin where she finds the true meaning of life. From the negative characters she has, there is a change that leads to the positive afterwards. This is when she finally has a dream to become a better figure in the community, although sometimes there are still doubts that arise in her mind. This song emphasizes the process of a transformation from negative to positive characters.

Frozen
The snow glows white on the mountain tonight
Not a footprint to be seen
A kingdom of isolation
And it looks like I'm the queen
The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside
Couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I've tried
Don't let them in, don't let them see
Be the good girl you always have to be
Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know
Well, now they know
Let it go, let it go
Can't hold it back anymore
Let it go, let it go
Turn away and slam the door
I don't care what they're going to say
Let the storm rage on
The cold never bothered me anyway
It's funny how some distance makes everything seem small
And the fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all
It's time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right, no wrong, no rules for me
I'm free
Let it go, let it go
I am one with the wind and sky
Let it go, let it go
You'll never see me cry
Here I stand and here I stay
Let the storm rage on
My soul is spiraling in frozen fractals all around
And one thought crystallizes like an icy blast
I'm never going back, the past is in the past
Let it go
The cold never bothered me anyway
Let it go, let it go
And I'll rise like the break of dawn
Let it go, let it go
That perfect girl is gone
Here I stand in the light of day
Let the storm rage on
Here is the interpretation of song lyrics by discussing it into song sections.

The snow glows white on the mountain tonight
Not a footprint to be seen
A kingdom of isolation
And it looks like I'm the queen
The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside
Couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I've tried
Don't let them in, don't let them see
Be the good girl you always have to be
Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know
Well, now they know
This section illustrates a struggle of one's life to endure the distractions and threats. Although no one was helping, she persisted. In addition there is a good character taught. It is how to be a child who behaves well.

Let it go, let it go
Can’t hold it back anymore
Let it go, let it go
Turn away and slam the door
I don't care what they're going to say
Let the storm rage on
The cold never bothered me anyway
This part describes us about a strong character that maintains a good life. She is a strong girl in her opinion. She is not easily interfered by what people talk about her.

Let it go, let it go
Can’t hold it back anymore
Let it go, let it go
Turn away and slam the door
I don't care what they're going to say
Let the storm rage on
The cold never bothered me anyway
This part describes us about a strong character that maintains a good life. She is a strong girl in her opinion. She is not easily interfered by what people talk about her.
It’s time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right, no wrong, no rules for me
I’m free

This is a part of the song which the power of the good character is brought up perfectly. This section describes a strong consistency and personality, overcoming the fear that once haunted her. This part gives us a picture of having a strong child, a person who is not easily influenced by others. She is a child who is free from all rules and ties bound: fear and anxiety.

Let it go, let it go
I am one with the wind and sky
Let it go, let it go
You’ll never see me cry
Here I stand and here I stay
Let the storm rage on
My power flurries through the air into the ground
My soul is spiraling in frozen fractals all around
And one thought crystallizes like an icy blast
I’m never going back, the past is in the past

There is a child’s strength described in catching a better future at this moment. The support of the universe in reaching her dreams becomes an extra strength that makes her tougher. This leads her to keep looking at the future, not to look back at her anxiety in the past.

Let it go
The cold never bothered me anyway
Let it go, let it go
And I’ll rise like the break of dawn
Let it go, let it go
That perfect girl is gone
Here I stand in the light of day
Let the storm rage on

This section is an affirmation of the previous one. She already becomes a figure who has a strong hope and dream. The word ‘dawn’ describes a life and a new day ahead.

In general, the song that won the Grammy Awards for Best Song Written for Visual Media category in 2015 reveals the hope and struggling moments of a person in facing difficult times. There are many positive characters coming up in the lyrics. This song is a picture of a shifting process of all fear in the past into hope for a new day in the future. It is also illustrated how the child has the power to overcome obstacles and break down all the barriers of inability to rise again and look for a better future.

Analyzing lyrics of the song, there is also a meaning interpreted as a form of communication delivery and meaning of the message. A communicator actually constructs the lyrics in order to give a message to the communicant. This process is called transitivity process. Referring to the term ‘transitivity’ proposed by Simpson (2004), the transitivity system is divided into 3 components involving a process, a participant, and a situation (Zahoor and Janjua, 2016). The process manifests from the words conveyed, the participant refers to who does and means, and the situation refers to time and place. This is in line with the statement where a language is one of the communication media in the delivery of messages. In this case a language plays an important role in the way human gives a meaning of things. Quoting Bloor and Bloor, Zahoor and Janjua (2016) also stated that “when people use language, their language acts produce - construct meanings.” This means that in a verbal communication, there is a meaning contained in it when someone signifies it.

The results of research on the character education process found in the songs How Far I ‘ll Go and Let It Go, are as follows:
1. All informants stated that both songs have positive contributions for the character development of the child. The lyrics and metaphors are presented as creative and fun learning for the development of the child’s character. The informants stated that the content and lyrics of the soundtracks provide important things for children’s character education, namely: perseverance, confidence, positive thinking about life values, firm stance, courage, excellence, emotional control, compassion to others, the mental attitude of self in association with others, the spirit in achieving something by the process of learning, and how to treat others well.
2. All informants confirmed that the music and rhythm of both soundtracks are easy listening.
This puts more attention for children to always listen to the soundtracks repeatedly. Youtube alleviates children to listen to songs repeatedly, so they can sing and memorize. The lyrics of the soundtracks help all the informants discuss the content of the songs and interpret them together with children to lead to the character of a better child. Animated visualization strengthens the interest of children to listen to soundtracks repeatedly. There are positive traits that informants raise in the discussion to children.

3. Eight (8) informants stated that they begin the process of developing character education to children is firstly by singing along together. Furthermore the informants help the child interpret the song content and describe it before coming to discussion with the children. After discussing the contents of song, the informants then give advice and positive teachings in accordance with the song. There are some sentences in Let It Go lyrics that can be taken into a discussion. They are “be the good girl you always have to be” and “and the fears that once controlled me cannot get to me at all.” While from the song How Far I’ll Go, the sentences are “everybody on this island has a role on this island” and “I can make us strong.”

4. Specifically, there are four (4) informants who deliberately discuss vocabulary enrichment. This is done mainly from informants who have children of 10 and 11 years old. They intentionally do vocabulary enrichment because their children attend international schools using English language most of the time. The informants print the song lyrics for vocabulary enrichment and discussion. The informants also consult with a dictionary to find out the meaning of words in the lyrics. Knowing new vocabulary makes it easy for the informants to invite children to interpret the lyrics and then conduct character education. This is reinforced by Spellings (2005: 28) expressing that “parents should help children think about what they read, reflect on it and talk about how it might relate to their own lives.”

5. All informants need special time in the discussion of developing children character education. Their main reason is because the song lyrics presented are not always straightforward. The use of terms and metaphor must be interpreted well before pointing it into character education. This may take at least 1 hour. The time taken usually occurs during afternoon or evening at the leisure time of informants and children, or in holidays. Usually informants start a conversation about character education after the child reviews the song back by singing it. There is even one (1) informant who discusses the contents of the song during a karaoke time at home. This discussion is also carried out when the child feels comfortable, supported by a relaxed atmosphere. The convenience of this interaction also leads the children tell their experiences related to their characters and colleagues’ at school and neighborhood. This point makes informants easy to discuss about characters. Lal (2013: 158) states that “effective communication skills help to set and carry through on firm and consistent limits and consequences for child’s behavior. Positive interaction with children builds cooperation and helps reduce conflict in the home…Parent-child relationship is very important in building self-confidence and self respect amongst children.” This well-established relationship will also foster other positive characters. “There is good evidence that certain parenting styles have a strong influence on the development of cognitive and behavioral attributes, as well as on the key outcomes for children including in the labor market, their educational attainment, and general health and wellbeing.” (Lexmond and Reeves, 2009: 44)

6. All informants present that when conveying the message, the language used is the one which is easy to digest and understand. The informant leads this discussion according to the child’s mindset. The informants acknowledge that it is not easy to do this, so it takes a patience and readiness of informants in answering questions raised by children. There are 8 (eight) informants do storytelling of song lyrics to make it easier for children to understand. This is as a bridge to enter character education process. “Children would identify themselves with the characters in the stories, and for this reason, the characters
should bear positive qualities.” (Turan and Ulutas, 2016: 174).

7. In developing character education, there are 7 (seven) informants who capture children’s negative examples as an evaluation material in the discussion. Informants compare what their children did and what the lyrics say. This is done in order to raise positive characters in them. For example, when discussing the lyrics related to how to be a good child, the informant asked the child what negative things the child has done. Thereafter, an evaluation is performed. The informants convey the consequences of negative actions, so that children will not repeat them again. “We can promote the compassion by helping our children to think about how others feel.” (Spellings, 2005: 5). The informants also gave examples of the good things the main character in the movie and playmates in school have done for children to imitate.

8. All informants stated that there are changes in children’s behavior and habits. These are:
   a. Three (3) informants stated that there is a change in the character of children who used to be shy, but they currently develop to be more confident.
   b. Being a cheerful child is also one of the changes experienced by five (5) informants. The informants said that after discussing lyrics of the song, it makes them motivated to sing it along so the mood becomes cheerful at home or at school. There are even two (2) informants saying that their children can interpret and perform the songs well. A happy heart makes positive energy in itself to do good things. “Happy people show superior performance in every activity and situation.” (Lyubomirsky and King, 2005: 845)
   c. Uniquely, there is one (1) informant who also expresses that her 7-year-old boy is not easy to give up and cry again after having discussion on characters performed by song lyrics.
   d. Interpretation of the lyrics “be the good you always have to be” with a broad positive meaning, makes the children develop their self-disciplined attitude. This process is felt by two (2) informants. Their children gradually show a good process of becoming more disciplined children in terms of time and responsibility.
   e. All informants stated that children’s character change do not occur in an instant time. They sometimes remind children many times on how to be like the character in the song lyrics. Besides, informants need to have different approach in developing good characters so the children understand what they supposed to do.

   Pala states that developing character education results in good impact on strengthening positive characters. “Character traits should include, but are not limited to, courage, good judgment, integrity, civility, kindness, perseverance, responsibility, tolerance, self-discipline, respect for school personnel, …, respect to others.” (Pala, 2011: 24). The changes hopefully lead to positive impacts on children’s socialization in society.

   Observing the results of the analysis of Walt Disney’s cartoon soundtracks which is in accordance with the role of them in building character education, Pala (2011: 23) adds that “good character is not formed automatically; it is developed over time through a sustained process of teaching, example, learning and practice. It is developed through character education.” Character education built from both songs reveal positive and good characters for children. The lyrics of soundtracks convey a message about how to have a strong self mentality, intelligence of character, and strong personality in facing all forms of obstacles. “… by bringing awareness of music’s ability to influence emotions and lyrics ability to connect to meaning we can enhance individual well-being through listening to music.” (Ransom, 2015: 21)

**Conclusion**

Character education can be developed by various media, including songs. Some of cartoon soundtracks have special concerns in children’s development. The process of teaching character education needs a positive atmosphere and ways too. The song writer puts positive characters in lyrics that a person may learn on how to be a good
person. Not only learn about music and English, but children also learn about human character, personality, good values, and other positive attitudes. Parents can also build a harmonious bond to children. Positive characters built are expected to be absorbed by the children so that there is a good change on characters. This then supports the process of children's intelligence and mental development.

Interpreting song lyrics require good information in analyzing it so positive characters can be maximally implemented. Character education by analyzing song lyrics can be done by discussion, evaluation, question and answer. Positive changes in children do not occur in a short time.

Taking movie soundtracks for character education requires tight selection of songs. The songs should contain a strong, clear, and positive interpretation. Parents may maximally use them in building concept of life values and characters. This all starts from family.

References


