

Visual Analysis of Totoro's Character in The Film My Neighbor Totoro

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Abstract; Totoro in the film "My Neighbor Totoro" has become the most iconic character among other Studio Ghibli films. Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation studio that has produced many legendary animated films. The company, which was founded in 1985, is led by Hayao Miyazaki, whose name is already very famous thanks to the success of his films. One of the animated films produced by Studio Ghibli is "My Neighbor Totoro". With a refreshing story and full of fantasy, Totoro in the film "My Neighbor Totoro" managed to grab the attention of the audience. Her large body and overgrown with cat-like fur and has a big smile that reveals teeth makes her look very adorable. The focus of this research is on the design and visualization of character characters. The purpose of this study is to describe how to design a character and how the visual character of the character is using a qualitative descriptive method using a research procedure in the form of presenting data with research that will be converted into writing. The character characters studied will be presented with design strategies, descriptions and visual analysis that include character design and expression. With the results of the research that has been carried out, this research can be a source of the latest reference materials, comparison materials, and others for animators and illustrators in making a character design.

Keywords: movie, character, My Neighbor Totoro, Totoro, visualization

1. Introduction

My Neighbor Totoro is a 1988 Japanese fantasy animated film written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Produced by Tôru Hara, the beautiful, originally titled *Tonari no Totoro*, was released in Japan on April 16, 1988, and Walt Disney Home Entertainment was re-released on March 7, 2006 with language transfer. With a recorded budget of around 3.7 million USD, the film has grossed over 41 million USD at the worldwide box office as of September 2019, in addition to earning approximately 277 million USD from home video sales and 1.142 billion USD from licensed merchandise sales, adding up to approximately 1.46 billion USD in total all-time revenue, according to Wikipedia.



Figure 1. My Neighbor Totoro Movie Poster
Source: <https://www.cntraveler.com>

My Neighbor Totoro won the Animage Anime Grand Prix prize, the Mainichi Film Award and the Kinema Junpo Award for "Best Film" in 1988. The film also received a Special Award at the Blue Ribbon Awards in the same year. My Neighbor Totoro was ranked 41st in Empire magazine's "100 Best Films of World Cinema" in 2010, while Totoro was ranked 18th on the list of 50 Best Animated Film Characters - Empire. A list of the biggest animated films in Time Out ranks the number 1 film. A similar list compiled by Time Out editors ranks the film number 3. My Neighbor Totoro is also the highest-rated animated film in the 2012 Sight & Sound critics' poll for the best film of all time. The character Totoro made several cameo appearances in a number of Studio Ghibli films and video games as well as serving as a mascot for the studio, also recognized as one of the most popular characters in Japanese animation. (Primaresti 2020)

The character Totoro, Hayao Miyazaki's imaginary creature, was created into a jovial creature and likes children. The shape of the character is a combination of an owl (fukuro), a cat (neko) and a raccoon (tanuki). Some people consider this animated character created by Hayao Miyazaki as a subtle creature waiting for trees, some even think of it like genderuwo in Indonesia. Even though this creature is not as scary as genderuwo. Totoro became the main character in My Neighbor Totoro and took the two sisters in the film through a journey full of mystery and wonder. Totoro often gives Satsuki and Mei gifts in the form of grains that can transform into a big tree, even this character is very cute and adorable.



Figure 2. Totoro Character Design
Source: <https://www.redbubble.com>

This film tells the story of two sisters, Satsuki and Mei. Satsuki and Mei will move to a village along with her father. The reason the family moved out was to be closer to visiting Satsuki and Mei's mother who was hospitalized. Unfortunately it is not told of the illness suffered by their mother. When they were going to live in the new neighborhood, the two brothers and their father would occupy a two-story house in the village. Like new residents, Satsuki and Mei cleaned the entire contents of the house, when they were about to clean the attic, suddenly a large and hairy creature came out. The encounter with the creature becomes the story idea in this film. As new residents, Satsuki and Mei are terrified to see the creature. Fortunately, the creature was friendly to the two brothers and said welcome by giving seeds to the brothers. The seeds given by these creatures are planted in front of their homes and can grow briefly into a large tree. The journey is full of magic and penetrates the passage of time passed by the two brothers after meeting the creature. From then on, Satsuki and Mei are no longer afraid of the creature because the creature can entertain Satsuki and Mei with their jovial characters. In fact, they often play together.

Through this background description, the researcher intends to analyze Totoro's character design in the film *My Neighbor Totoro* through a holistic character theory approach. The purpose and benefit of this research is that in the future more and more of the nation's children can work by understanding the characters that are able to attract the attention of the community.

2. Research Methods

In this study, researchers used a qualitative approach presented in the form of descriptive analysis with the stages of design review. The data collection techniques in this study are documentation to obtain primary data and literature studies to obtain secondary data. Documentation is done by collecting data in the form of characters contained in the film *My Neighbor Totoro*. Literature studies are carried out by reading, observing, and analyzing documents and data sources through books, the internet and also scientific papers.

In data processing, researchers carry out a data reduction process, namely sorting data to focus on data groups. The result of the reduction process is carried out the process of data identification. After data identification, the next step is the presentation and analysis of the data. In this case, the researcher tries to compile and analyze data so that information can be concluded and answer problems in the study. In analyzing a design work, at least researchers must carry out four stages of analysis (Adityawan 2010), including the following:

1.) Descriptive

At this stage, the researcher makes observations and deciphers the elements in the work without making judgments. Researchers describe the elements in Totoro's character.

2.) Formal Analysis

At this stage, researchers discuss how the basic elements in a work can be formed into a page arrangement or layout. Researchers analyzed Totoro's body shape design.

3.) Interpretation

At this stage, the researcher interprets the meaning of a design work. Analyze how meaning to express the wishes of the designer in the work. In this study, Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis was used to examine the character of Totoro contained in the film *My Neighbor Totoro*.

4.) Evaluation

At this stage, researchers conducted an evaluation, by comparing the visuals of Totoro's character in the animated film My Neighbor Totoro with the visuals of other characters in the same animated film. The next stage is the drawing of conclusions. Drawing conclusions is an attempt made by researchers to find or understand meaning, order, patterns, explanations, causal flows.

3. Discussion

In this discussion on Totoro, we will explain the visual analysis process of Totoro's character in the animated film My Neighbor Totoro. Visual analysis is recognizing and understanding a work of art that focuses on visual elements such as colors, lines, textures, and others. There are 4 stages of analysis or discussion process when analyzing a design work, including the descriptive stage, formal analysis, interpretation, and evaluation (Adityawan 2010):

a) Descriptive Stage



Figure 3. Totoro Character
 Source: <https://id.pinterest.com>

Character characters are visual forms that take part or are involved in events that are in the course of the story. Totoro's character in My Neighbor Totoro is depicted as a tree-bearing creature in the forest near the home of one of the main characters, Mei and Satsuki. Totoro has adorable visuals with a combination of various animals, namely owls, cats, and raccoons. Totoro's body is larger than that of humans and has a dark and young gray coat color. Totoro has ears resembling cat ears, the pattern on the body is also the same as the pattern on the animal's body, namely an owl. Totoro has sharp nails on his hands and feet like a raccoon, as well as on the tail.



Figure 4. Totoro's Character Smiles
 Source: <https://www.deviantart.com>

With its unique shape, this creature doesn't look scary at all and even looks cute and adorable. For this reason, this creature has become an icon of studio ghibli, which is the largest and best anime production house in Japan. Its feathered shape more resembles an owl, so it does not look creepy. Totoro's character has a very wide smile and looks big white teeth. The look in the blank, big eyes when smiling may look a little creepy to some of the people who see it.

b) Formal Analysis



Figure 5. Totoro falls asleep in a tree




Source: <https://id.pinterest.com>


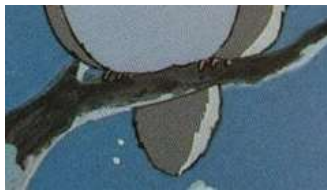
In the film, Totoro's character is first shown when he is fast asleep in a big tree until one day a small child named Mei comes over and disturbs Totoro's bedtime. The friendship between them was established. Since the meeting, Satsuki and Mei have continued to engage in amazing events with Totoro. Totoro also invites Satsuki and Mei to fly across the countryside. Totoro's character is illustrated using a 2-dimensional shape animation style with a touch of very thin lines. The colors displayed on the Totoro characters seem soft and not too contrasting because they use pastel colors. So it is comfortable to be seen by the eye.

c) Interpretation

In this stage using the theory of Roland Barthes. In Barthes's theory, he developed semiotics into two levels of signs, namely the degree of denotation and connotation (Rusmana 2014). According to Barthes, denotation is a sign whose signifier has a high degree of agreement that produces true meaning. For Barthes, denotation is a first-level signification system while connotation is a second-level signification system.

Denotation is the first state of closed meaning. Denotation produces explicit, direct and definite meanings. Denotation is the true meaning, socially agreed upon together, which refers to reality (Vera 2014).

Visual	Marker	Signs
	Large rounded body and fluffy body of gray color.	Totoro has a large and rounded body, also has gray fur.
	The shape of the ears, nose, mustache like a cat. With round eyes and black pupils.	Totoro has the same shape of ears, nose, and mustache as a cat. With a round eye shape and black pupils.
	The pattern on the body is like the pattern on the body of an animal, namely an owl. The fingers of the hand there are 5 with sharp nails.	Totoro has the same body pattern as owl animals. It also has 5 fingers and 3 toes with sharp nails.

	<p>The mouth can shrink and enlarge. A big smile and big teeth.</p>	<p>Totoro has a mouth that can shrink and enlarge with a big smile until he can see his big teeth.</p>
	<p>The tail is short and thick like a raccoon.</p>	<p>Totoro has a short and thick tail like a raccoon tail.</p>

d) Evaluation

Based on the explanation at the descriptive stage, formal analysis, and interpretation, it can be seen that in general, the visual character of the big and cute Totoro has millions of miracles in him that can make Mei and Satsuki amazed at the events passed along with Totoro. With its helper nature, it can change the perspective of the audience that a large creature with sharp nails that may seem to be attacking people, turns out to be able to help people (Satsuki) who ask for help to find the missing Mei.

4. Conclusion

The character Totoro in the animated film *My Neighbor Totoro*, has a visual that is quite unique and interesting because the visuals shown are in the form of a mixture of various animals and have a round and large body, so that Totoro's character can attract the attention of everyone from various circles, especially children. By showing a wide smile to the appearance of teeth makes Totoro's character seem cute and adorable. Hayao Miyazaki is smart enough to present the character of Totoro, making this film full of intrigue and suspenseful. And it's no wonder that Totoro's character became iconic and became the mascot of studio ghibli for many years.

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