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Introduction

Animated characters and cartoons are common for television and films. Nonverbal communication has played an extremely vital role in enhancing some of the most famous cartoon characters such as Donald Duck, Tom and Jerry, Shrek, and the Japanese animated character Kenshiro. One of the most spectacular innovations in the entertainment industry was the creation of interactive drama through the interaction of both virtual and human characters. Therefore, virtual characters form a remarkably essential part of the animated films, as well as the interactive 3D graphic simulations (Kopp, & Wachsmuth, 2004, p. 51). Personality, emotions, self-motivation, social relationships and behavior form the targets that famous animators try to employ through both verbal and nonverbal communication of their characters. As a result, the paper aims at analyzing how the elements of nonverbal communication have been employed to enhance personalities of such characters as Donald Duck, Shrek, the Japanese character Kenshiro and Tom and Jerry. It also analyzes how such elements reveal their relationship dynamics.

Nonverbal Communication Elements

While some of the animated films that feature these characters use both verbal and nonverbal communication, some of them, such as *Tom and Jerry* and *Donald Duck* rely solely upon the nonverbal elements to construe meanings in their narratives as well as portray the personalities of the characters. The only sound that is involved in both *Donald Duck* and *Tom and Jerry* is the Mozart-like music that accompanies the visual portrayals of the narrative. While other films mentioned above utilize a combination of

both verbal and nonverbal cues, nonverbal elements of communication, or, in other words, nonverbal cues, are widely used in enhancing the characters' personalities, as well as revealing the dynamics of the relationships between the given and other characters in the films (Efran, 1998, p. 24).

Nonverbal elements involve gestures, facial expressions, body movements, appearance, posture, and physical contacts amongst others. In most cases, what is referred to as nonverbal communication is completely divorced with any sort of voicing. However, some sounds such as groans that are not related to any language are classified as nonverbal communication. Despite the fact that verbal communication makes the most sense to humans, nonverbal communication also carries its valuable information that enables people to comprehend others within their surroundings. Such nonverbal communication can be relied upon by the audience watching the animated films in a bid to come up with a good and realistic definition of the characters that they see. In some situations, verbal communications can pass more information than nonverbal ones. A good case in point is the *Tom and Jerry* situation. The background music and the sound effects applied are of less importance compared to the nonverbal elements.

The internal or what is termed as the cognitive state of these characters is revealed in all the channels of nonverbal communication that they engage in. Through a keen analysis of the nonverbal elements, a certain attribute of a character can be revealed to the audience. These include the age and the status of the characters, the gender, culture and role, as well as emotions, the mood and the personality of the character.

Facial expressions

In an effort to enhance a narrative, as well as to make sense to the audience through giving them characters that they can easily relate to, facial expressions are important (Efran, 1998, p. 25). They are known to express emotions, as well as inner thoughts and feelings of a given character. Interpersonal attitudes are reflected by the face of the character, which provides nonverbal feedback on the comments that others give regarding to the character. Therefore, the face opens and closes the channels of communication by complementing or qualifying verbal responses, thus, replacing speech (Efran, 1998, p. 24). Researchers have been investigating the ways in which animators use facial expressions when generating speech. In depicting the relationship of the characters of Tom and Jerry, facial expressions are effectively used, which makes the viewer to be aware of tension and mistrust that both characters have for each other. The Japanese animation character Kenshiro uses many facial expressions that enhance the animators' efforts of expressing the character as the one with an aggressive and brave personality.

Facial expressions compliment verbal cues, and nonverbal cues on their own strive to give a certain message about the character (Efran, 1998, p. 24). The character Donald Duck is famed for being a seemingly naïve young duck who evades danger mostly accidentally. Facial expressions such as wide opening of the eyes to betray surprise or shock are common with the character. The character Shrek also employs facial expressions to a larger extend to depict his relationship with the human characters in the film.

Gestures and Body Movements

Gestures form the voluntary and involuntary movements that aim at viewing some particular sort of information. Gestures can be expressed in different ways. They are not restricted to the hands, as it is commonly thought to be the case. In both live and animated characters, gestures are used to stress a point, make it clear or even expand verbally communicated information. Gestures also control the process of communication of two people, at the same time expressing the same information by gesticulation. It is, however, in cartoon or animated characters where gestures play a more significant role in enhancing the characters' personalities and the relationship dynamics than in live characters. In most of the 'silent' animated films such as Donald Duck, which have rarely incorporated any verbal dialogues, most of communication between the characters is done with the help of gestures. Emotions such as fury, anger or happiness are portrayed using gestures. The personalities of the characters Tom and Jerry are also enhanced to a greater extent through gestures considering that there is hardly any verbal communication that can assist in the same in such films.

On the other hand, bodily movements are intended to convey given information that may even be contrary to the verbal message given. Dramatic aspects such as irony can be demonstrated through body movements. Body movements include but are not restricted to walking, reaching, turning, bending and so on. The cognitive state of the performer of these actions can be assessed and analyzed by considering only the manner in which these movements are carried out. As it is known, there are many manners to express one's walking, for example, happily or sadly, fast or slow. For instance, by assessing the pace of Shrek's walk during his wedding, the viewer is clearly aware that the character is not at home with the idea of him mixing with humans

considering that he is a giant despite being considered a hero by the human characters around him. Body movement such as bending while greeting other characters, as performed by the character Kenshiro, reveals the dominance of the Japanese culture in the character's nature. Such body movements reveal the fact that the character is a staunch follower of the Japanese values.

Postures

In animated films, posture plays a significant role in portraying the connection existing among characters, as well as the personality of the character. Character's traits such as those associated with the social status of the character are revealed through the postures that these characters take. A posture is a considerably vital indicator of the degree of involvement; it shows the status of the character in relation to other characters and the degree of liking that the particular character gets from other characters with whom he or she interacts. For instance, the forward leaning posture, which the character Donald Duck employs, suggests a higher involvement that the character enjoys. Posture is also a prior pointer of the strength of some of the emotional conditions of the characters. The drooping posture that Shrek employs when he interacts with the human characters that he detests portrays his miserable emotional state. The tense posture that the character Tom usually employs reveals his anger towards the other character Jerry. The anxiety for capturing the mouse and making Jerry pay for all the troubles caused burns inside of him.

However, the fact that perceptions associated with postures are not rigid based on the way they change in most times, according to both time and culture, should be put into consideration while analyzing the personality of a given animated character

concerning the posture that portrays the character's personality. For instance, the Japanese animated character Kenshiro is depicted as having a forward-slanted posture that is taken to reveal the swiftness that the character possesses. This association mostly emanates from the Japanese Yakuza tradition. The relaxed posture that Shrek employs reveals his friendliness, especially to the human characters around him, as opposed to other ghostly and giant characters in famous animations.

Visual orientation

What a character pays keen attention to, as well as the length of time it takes to be in that attentive state, makes an essential element of nonverbal language through which the personality of the character and the dynamics of the relationship with other characters can be analyzed (Efran, 1998, p.25). A character's gaze or even the dilation and constriction of their pupils can indicate their interests, attention and levels of involvement (Efran, 1998, p.26). The fact that the character of Donald Duck rarely maintains eye contact is pertinent in revealing that the character is not confident. It also shows how the character is naïve and capable of falling into the trap that his adversaries lay for him. This makes the viewers develop a sense of sympathy towards the character, which is ultimately satisfied. The escape that he makes is easily identifiable with the viewers' emotions of happiness. The harsh eye contact made by the character Tom in *Tom and Jerry* makes the character dislikable. Therefore, the audience takes his failure as success upon them. The character Kenshiro hardly makes eye contact, especially with his superiors: a deed that is mostly associated with the Japanese culture where the young always approaches the elderly with a leaning posture greeting them without making eye contact as a sign of respect. Maintaining an

eye contact, Shrek gives the impression that the character poses no harm to others regardless of the fact that they are from different natural and social circles.

Appearance

Having characters in a visual art forces the audience to understand and interpret animation characters in terms of their physical appearance (Kopp, & Wachsmuth, 2004, p.51). How a given animation character or a cartoon appears determines the personality that the audience attaches to this character. For instance, the physical appearance of the character Shrek makes him appear different from other characters that are smaller and with 'normal' skin color. Shrek is huge with green skin color and protruding ears that make him look scary. However, one thing about this character is the appearance, which makes him a different kind of ogre. His body appears like that of a young baby. This ensures that the viewers are less suspicious of him. In fact, they love him. The fierce look by the character Tom makes him a dislikable character in relation to Jerry.

Conclusion

The elements of nonverbal communication play a very significant role in enhancing a character's personality, as well as portraying relationship dynamics in animated films. The success of utilizing nonverbal language in animation and cartoon characters has enabled most of these characters to overcome the daily life challenges and, in fact, be favored by so many people across the world for a very long time. Apart from revealing personality, nonverbal language, as used in animations, is critical in that it depicts the cultural setting of narratives in which the characters are placed (Efran, 1998, p.25).

Reference List

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