

JAPANESE CULTURAL VALUES IN DORAEMON: HOW FACE THREATENING ACTS REVEAL THE IMPLICIT CULTURE OF JAPAN

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Abstrak: Studi ini berdasarkan komik Jepang yang sangat populer di seluruh Asia, Doraemon. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis Face Threatening Acts yang terdapat dalam Manga Doraemon, bagaimana mereka dapat menunjukkan kultur Jepang yang terkandung dalam Manga ini. Peneilitan-penelitian sebelumnya mengenai Doraemon tidak memasukan unsur Face Threatening Acts di dalam analisis. Terlebih, sebagian besar berfokus pada kultur eksplisit yang terdapat dalam Manga ini. Inilah gap yang akan diisi oleh studi ini dimana studi ini akan memakai Face Threatening Acts dalam bagian analisis, serta, studi ini akan berfokus pada kultur implisit yang terdapat pada Doraemon. Hasil dari studi ini menunjukkan bahwa 'filial piety' merupakan nilai kultur Jepang yang paling banyak ditemukan dalam Manga Doraemon. Studi ini dapat dijadikan acuan bagi studi-studi mendatang untuk membuktikan apakah kultur Jepang yang tertera secara implisit di Doraemon memang merupakan penyebab ketidakpopuleran Manga ini di beberapa negara, seperti Amerika Serikat.

Kata kunci: Doraemon, Face Threatening Acts, Kultur Jepang

Abstract: *This study is based on a highly popular Manga across Asia, Doraemon. This study aims to find the Face Threatening Acts contained in Doraemon and how these show Japanese cultural values which contradict American values. Previous studies examining Doraemon mostly do not include Face Threatening Acts in the analysis. Furthermore, they also focus more on the explicit culture contained in Doraemon. These are the gaps fulfilled by this study since it aims to examine the implicit culture of Japan using face Threatening Acts contained in Doraemon. The result of this study shows that 'filial piety' is the Japanese cultural value mostly shown in the story. This study could be used as the base for future studies to examine whether or not Japanese implicit culture in Doraemon was truly the cause of Doraemon's unpopularity in some countries such as the U.S.*

Keywords: Doraemon, Face Threatening Acts, Japanese Culture

INTRODUCTION

Pop culture is a powerful weapon to introduce a country. One of the examples of a country which promotes itself through pop culture is Japan. According to Kartika (2018), Japan introduced itself to the world through anime and manga. Doraemon might be the most well-known Japanese anime and manga in Asia. In Indonesia, Doraemon was firstly aired in 1988. It has received great attention since then. It was less likely that children in the 90's did not regularly enjoy this series on Sundays. Doraemon has delivered much cultural information about Japan to the outside world, including Indonesia. Tatami and Dorayaki are two culture-related elements most shown in Doraemon. However, not every country welcomes Doraemon positively.

Tushi (2014), stated that the possibility that children will rely on shortcuts and impossible solutions are two factors that make parents in Bangladesh do not favour Doraemon to be their children's TV viewing. The popularity of Doraemon did not also successfully spread across the US. According to Podsatiangool (2017), in spite of the fact that Doraemon successfully became an icon throughout Asia, it couldn't achieve the same success in the US market, because of its "too Japanese-ness" in terms of explicit culture. Explicit culture refers to the culture that human eyes can see, such as food and clothes. Therefore, it can be said that Doraemon could not gain popularity in the US because Japanese explicit culture is so much different from American explicit culture. This is the gap that will be fulfilled by the current study since this study will focus on the implicit culture of Doraemon, i.e. cultural values, which might be another cause of Doraemon's unpopularity in the US. Moreover, most studies examining Doraemon do not include Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in the data analysis. This is another gap fulfilled by the current study since this study will use pragmatics approach, with the inclusion of FTAs in the data analysis. Besides, cultural approach will also be used to analyze the data. The result of this study could be used as the base for future studies to prove

whether or not the differences between Japanese and American implicit culture were truly the aspects making Doraemon unpopular in the U.S.

In line with the importance of this study previously mentioned, this study aims to:

1. find what FTAs contained in Doraemon Manga;
2. examine Japanese cultural values which are contained in these FTAs.

Therefore, the two research questions addressed in this study are below.

1. What FTAs are contained in the dialogue spoken by characters in Doraemon?
2. How do these FTAs reveal Japanese cultural values?

In order to answer the research questions above, some foundational theories are needed. Below are some explanations that will be used for the analysis part.

1. Pragmatics

According to Levinson (as cited in Lubabah, 2019), pragmatics is the study of language and its contexts. Yule (as cited in Lubahah, 2019) also states that the study of pragmatics deals with the relation between what a speaker means and what the listener interprets. The theory of Face Threatening Acts will be discussed below to specify the said pragmatics approach.

Face Threatening Acts

Every individual has two types of face (image), which are positive and negative faces. These faces could be threatened by acts directed to them. Below is further explanation on Positive Face, Negative Face, and acts that might threaten someone's positive or negative face.

a. Positive Face

According to Redmond (2015), positive face refers to someone's want to be considered competent. Someone's positive face might be

threatened by some acts. According to Robert (1991), a threat to someone's positive face might include criticism or insult, such as disapproval, complaint, disagreement, and contradiction.

Moreover, Redmond (2015), divides two types of acts that can threaten someone's positive face. They are: actions done by others that can threaten our positive face and actions done by us that can threaten our own positive face.

Actions done by others that can threaten our positive face include: complaints and insults, criticism, disapproval, disagreeing, and asking for clarification; while actions done by us that can threaten our own positive face include apologies, confessions, and unintentional physical action (burp).

b. Negative Face

According to Redmond (2015), negative face refers to someone's want for autonomy. There are acts that could threaten someone's negative face. According to Robert (1991), a threat to someone's negative face might include request, such as suggestion, advice, reminding, threat, offers, and promises to help.

Moreover, Redmond (2015), divides two types of acts that can threaten someone's negative face. They are: actions done by others that can threaten our negative face and actions done by us that might threaten our own negative face.

Actions done by others that can threaten our negative face include: orders, requests, advice, suggestions, and threats and warnings; while actions done by us that can threaten our own negative face include: accepting an offer, promising something, offering something, and accepting a thank.

In addition, Brown and Levinson (as cited in Saputra, 2016), state that one act that can threaten the speaker's negative face is expressing a thank.

2. Japanese Cultural Values which Contradict American Values

Silence

According to Viswat and Kobayashi (2008), Japanese treat silence as positive. They do not find the necessity to force themselves to speak. However, Americans treat silence as negative. They feel that silence in a conversation makes people uncomfortable. A conversation consisting of only giving and receiving answers is considered to be rude or boring. These findings are supported by Barnlund (as cited in Ito, 1991) which state that most Japanese and American respondents in his study thought that being formal and silent are two characters possessed by Japanese, while being informal, spontaneous, and talkative are qualities possessed by Americans.

Disagreement

As stated by Nakayama (as cited in Viswat and Kobayashi, 2008), harmony is the primary value in Japanese culture which makes confrontation unacceptable. Meanwhile, according to Stewart and Bennet (as cited in Viswat and Kobayashi, 2008), confrontation is tolerated in American culture. Japanese students in their study felt that talking must be preceded by careful thoughts. However, American students felt that giving spontaneous responses could avoid someone to feel that you were ignoring them. Viswat and Kobayashi (2008) also states that most Japanese students felt that immediate disagreement tended to lead to displeasure. On the other hand, the American students preferred to give immediate disagreement due to the fact that people tended to forget what they had said after a period of time and postponed disagreement would feel irrelevant.

Filial Piety

According to Lieber, Nihira, & Mink (2004), care, achievement and excellence, obedience, respect, work ethic, and responsibility are six elements of filial values. In line with this, according to Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (as cited in Maeda, 2004), loyalty and

devotion to parents is the definition of the word 'piety'; therefore, 'filial piety' means the loyalty and devotion given by children to their parents.

According to Master You (as cited in "Filial Piety and Japanese Tales | Spirits, Gods and Ghosts of East Asia" 2017), respecting parents and elders is the source of humanity; and this saying summarizes the importance of Filial Piety, which has been adopted in Japanese value for fifteen centuries. It is in line with Tsutsui, Muramatsu, and Higashino (2013), who state that respect for parents is the example of filial piety.

Moreover, Koyano (1996) states that emotional closeness and affection were not elements to be attached to instrumental support given for parents by their children; instead, gratitude and respect were the ones attached.

This value of 'filial piety' does not exist in American culture. According to one of the participants in Lieber, Nihira, & Mink's study (2004), American schools have very different values from Chinese', in which American values do not teach children to respect parents and the elderly. In contrast, according to Ikels (2004), in most of East Asian countries, family is still becoming the primary source of support for the elderly.

The materials used in this study are 6 volumes of Doraemon comic books, volumes 1, 3, 4, 6, 12, and 13 (13 titles). These numbers of volumes and titles are chosen since these numbers are considered enough to show cultural values in a story. These numbers of data are in line with the previous studies conducted by Utami & Udasmoro (2012) and Fatonah (2008). In their study, Utami & Udasmoro analyzed volumes 15-20 of Doraemon comic books. Moreover, Fatonah (2008) chose 4 volumes and 13 titles of Doraemon to be analyzed in her study.

The said 13 titles are chosen since they are considered to contain more examples of relevant data needed in this study, compared to the other titles. This data collection technique is in line with the study conducted by Utami & Udasmoro (2012), whose data collection was based on the number of problems potential to be analyzed in the analysis part.

To begin the analysis, the researcher will read the 13 titles chosen before underlining the Face Threatening Acts contained in the dialogue. Then, the researcher will give coding about Japanese cultural values shown in the FTAs. The researcher will then give narrative descriptions related to the FTAs and the cultural values using her literature-based interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the results and discussion of the current study. The results and discussion explain the Face Threatening Acts used in Doraemon (Research Question 1) and Japanese values shown in the FTAs (Research Question 2).

1. Face Threatening Acts: Threatening the Hearer's Positive Face

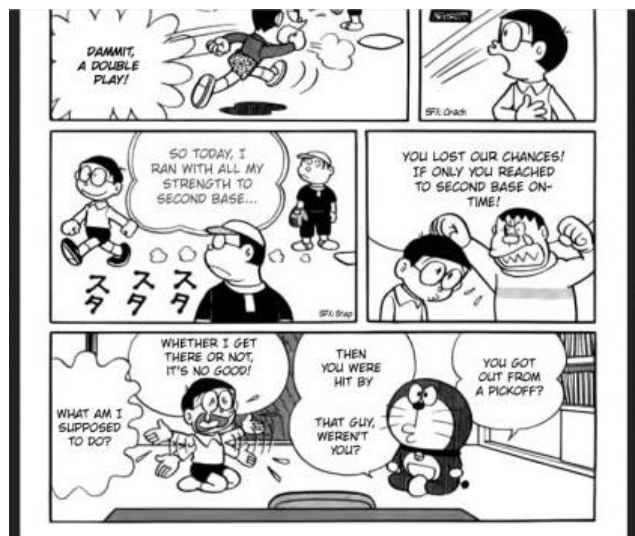
This section contains the examples of FTAs which threaten the hearer's positive face that reveal the values of 'disagreement is inappropriate' and 'filial piety'.

Japanese Value: Spontaneous Disagreement is Inappropriate

The datum analyzed for this value is taken from Doraemon comic book, volume 3, chapter 240, titled *King of Base Stealing*.

VOL.13 CHAPTER 240: KING OF BASE STEALING

Picture 1



Source: Manganelo

In this part of the story (Picture 1), Nobita is playing baseball with his friends. Unfortunately, Nobita is making a mistake which causes his team to lose. Giant, the leader of Nobita's friendship circle, then scolds Nobita for what he has done.

Giant: *"You lost our chances! If only you reached to second base on-time!"* **(FTA-hearer's positive face-complaint)**

Nobita does not say anything while Giant is scolding him. At home, he tells what happened to Doraemon.

Nobita: *"What am I supposed to do? Whether I get there or not, it's no good!"*

Doraemon: *"You got off from a pickoff? Then, you were hit by that guy, weren't you?"*

The fact that Nobita does not say anything to Giant while he is scolding him shows that Nobita is scared of Giant as Giant is portrayed as a bully. Moreover, it also shows that disagreement is considered impolite in Japanese culture which makes Nobita feel that it is inappropriate to confront what Giant is saying.

Japanese Value: Filial Piety

This section describes some examples of data which contain FTAs that threaten the hearer's positive face, which contain the value of filial piety. There are 5 data analyzed in this section.

DORAEMON VOL.13 CHAPTER 239: WHAT IS GONNA HAPPEN AT 7
O'CLOCK?

Picture 2



Source: Manganelo

In this part of the story (Picture 2), Dad is scolding Nobita for having a low grade in his test.

Dad: *"What's with this zero score?" (FTA-giving criticism)*

Nobita: *(silent) bow down*

Doraemon: *"Please have a closer look... at the name ..."*

When Dad is scolding Nobita for his low grade, Nobita does not say anything and does not even defend himself, which causes him to lose his positive face. In fact, he is just bowing down and remains silent. Doraemon is the one who tries to defend Nobita in a very polite manner. Doraemon gives pauses in his utterances (shown by the '...'). It shows that he is reluctant to confront Dad. This scene shows that Nobita, as well as Doraemon, highly respects Dad which causes them not to dare to explain the real circumstance. This portrays the value of 'filial piety' in Japanese society.

DORAEMON VOL.1 CHAPTER 5 : KOBE ABE

Picture 3



Source: Manganelo

In this part of the story (Picture 3), Mom is scolding Nobita for not cleaning up his room. Nobita has a reason for this, but Mom keeps scolding him. Nobita can only explain a little, mostly, he just keeps bowing down in front of his mom.

Mom: *"I told you to clean your room."*

Nobita: *"But I have to go to Shizu-Chan's house! I'll clean up when I get back."*

Mom: *"You always say that, but I have never seen you clean up once. You never listen to what I say." (FTA: criticism)*

This scene shows that Mom gives an FTA, which is criticism to Nobita's behaviour, which threatens Nobita's positive face. This FTA shows the Japanese value of 'filial piety' in which Nobita, as the son, cannot confront what his mom is saying or ordering since he is obliged to highly respect his mom.

DORAEMON VOL.12 CHAPTER 206 : THE SEEKING MISSILE

Picture 4



Source: Mangabat

Here (Picture 4), Giant locks his house door because he is scared that Nobita's missile will follow him inside the house. When his mom comes home and knocks the door, Giant, who has no idea that it is his mom who is knocking, makes a mistake by calling his mom 'kid'.

Mom: "It's daytime, so why are you locking the door? What are you trying to do?"

Giant: "Which kid is it? Oh, mum."

Mom: "What do you mean by 'which kid'? You speak to your mother like that? (FTAs: complaint, asking for clarification)"

This excerpt shows that the FTA (the complaint that Giant's mom gives) contains the value of 'filial piety', in which respect for parents is a must.

DORAEMON VOL.1 CHAPTER 12 : OPERATION: PROPOSE

Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



Source: Mangabat

Here (Pictures 5-7), Nobita asks his parents to tell about their journey to marriage, which then leads to a disagreement.

Dad: *“Wait a sec. That’s a complete opposite of what happened!”*
(FTA: disagreement)

Mom: *“What”*

Dad: *“You were in tears, begging me to marry you.”*

Mom: *“No way!”*

Nobita and Doraemon who see this fighting do not dare to try to calm their parents down. Instead, Nobita and Doraemon discuss this to each other.

Nobita: *“We shouldn’t have asked. Who do you think is lying?”*

Doraemon: *“I used the lie detector, but... It seems that both are telling the truth.”*

This reveals that Nobita and Doraemon cannot intervene their parents’ conversation since it is inappropriate. Filial piety is a value represented here.

DORAEMON VOL.13 CHAPTER 241: PASSPORT OF SATAN

Picture 8



Picture 9



Source: Mangabat

Mom: *“No means no!” (FTA: disapproval)*

Nobita: *“Why? I’m only asking if you can give me my allowance three days early.”*

Mom: *“Exactly, it’s only three days, you can wait. You can buy comics at any time.”*

Nobita (after mom leaves the room): *“But the comic I want is really popular! It’ll be sold out in three days!”*

This part of the story (Pictures 8-9) contains an FTA done by Nobita’s mom who gives disapproval to Nobita. Mom refuses to give Nobita the money to buy comic books. Nobita tries to persuade his mom but it fails. In fact, he explains about how popular the comic that he wants to buy is after his mom leaves the room. It shows that Nobita, as a child, must highly respect his

mom and cannot give direct disagreement in front of her. Filial piety is a value shown here.

2. Face Threatening Acts: Threatening the Speaker's Positive Face

This section focuses on the FTAs that threaten the speaker's positive face. There is only one value found here which is 'silence is positive'.

Japanese Value: Silence is Positive

The datum analyzed here is taken from Doraemon comic book, volume 12, chapter 207, titled *Fortune Telling Through Tongue Reading*.

DORAEMON VOL.12 CHAPTER 207 : FORTUNE TELLING THROUGH TONGUE READING

Picture 10



Picture 11



Source: Mangabat

In this excerpt (Pictures 10-11), Nobita and Doraemon are visiting a man whom they met years ago. They ask about his condition.

Man: *"I still continued writing novels... (FTA: confession) Although you told me that my fortune wasn't very good, literature is still my passion in life. It doesn't matter if it gets published or not. Right now, I'm working at a job and writing novels. I'm satisfied with my most recent works. Even if nobody recognizes me, I know that my novels are the best. So, I am very content right now."*

Doraemon: *"Oh, is that so"*

Here, the man is giving an FTA which threatens his own positive face by confessing that he is still writing novels even though it does not give him much money. During the conversation, Nobita and Doraemon do not say a word, they just listen to what the man is saying. Doraemon then finally says a very short utterance "Oh, is that so?" It shows that silence is seen as something positive in Japanese culture. Nobita and Doraemon do not need to force themselves to speak when they do not feel that it is necessary.

3. Face Threatening Acts: Threatening the Hearer's Negative Face

This third section of the analysis part focuses on the FTAs that threaten the hearer's negative face. There are three values found here.

Japanese Values: Spontaneous Disagreement is Inappropriate and Filial Piety

"Spontaneous agreement is inappropriate" and "filial piety" are the first two values found in this type of FTAs. These values are found in Doraemon comic book, Volume 6, Chapter 98, *The Girl with the Red Shoes*.

DORAEMON VOL.6 CHAPTER 98 : THE GIRL WITH THE RED SHOES

Picture 12



Source: Manganelo

In this part of the story (Picture 12), Nobita's mom is scolding Doraemon and Nobita for not cleaning up their room. She also orders them to clean it up, which is a form of FTA that threatens the hearer's negative face since it limits the hearer's freedom.

Mom: "Make sure all the junk is cleaned!" (FTA: order)

Mom: "Hurry up, all the things are scattered around, clean it." (FTA: order)

Doraemon (soliloquy): "Simply because, if mom is in a good mood, she won't abuse us."

Here, Doraemon does not say anything to Mom, Instead, he gives a soliloquy, complaining about what Mom is doing. It shows that Doraemon is

hesitant to confront Mom directly. It demonstrates the cultural value of ‘spontaneous disagreement is impolite’ in Japanese culture. Moreover, it also shows the value of ‘filial piety’ where respect for parents is a must in Japanese culture. This has most likely caused Doraemon not to confront what Mom is saying.

Japanese Value: Silence is Positive

In this part, the FTA clearly shows that silence is treated positively in Japanese culture. *Treasure Hunt* is the title of the excerpt analyzed here.

DORAEMON VOL.13 CHAPTER 234: TREASURE HUNT

Picture 13



Source: Manganelo

In this story (Picture 13), Doraemon and Nobita are looking for a site which has a skull rock. On their way, they encounter a local boy who is willing to show them where the skull is.

Nobita: “*Hello, can we ask?*”

Doraemon: “*Have you seen a skull?*” (FTA: implicit request)

Boy: “*Yes!*”

It is not explicitly stated that Doraemon and Nobita ask the boy to lead their way to the site they are looking for, but from the scene, the reader can notice that Nobita and Doraemon implicitly ask the boy to show them the site. This request is an FTA that threatens the hearer’s negative face because it limits the hearer’s freedom. On their way to the site, the boy does not say anything

to Nobita and Doraemon. This reveals the Japanese value that considers silence to be positive. The boy does not have the urgency to force himself to speak during their way to the site since it is not considered inappropriate for not talking to Nobita and Doraemon.

Japanese Value: Filial Piety

In this section, the data show that the FTAs contain the value of filial piety. The children in Doraemon give their highest respect to their parents. There are two stories analyzed here, which are *Transforming Biscuit* and *Body Pump*.

DORAEMON VOL.1 CHAPTER 3 : TRANSFORMING BISCUIT

Picture 14



Picture 15



Picture 16



Source: Mangabat

In this excerpt (Pictures 14-16), Nobita's mom is having a guest and asks Nobita to buy some snacks.

Mom: "Could you please go buy a few snacks for our guest?" (FTA: **order**)

Nobita: "It's too much trouble."

Since Nobita is too lazy to do this order, he simply serves animal biscuits which he finds in his room to the guest.

Mom: "What are these, animal biscuits!?"

Guest: "Don't worry about it. I love animal biscuits!"

Mom: "Go buy something appropriate!" (FTA: **order**)

Mom is upset and asks Nobita to buy some other snack. Nobita cannot refuse Mom's order. This FTA shows that parents are superior towards their children. Children must give their highest respect to parents, which causes Nobita to be unable to refuse his Mom's order. The value of 'filial piety' is shown here.

DORAEMON VOL.12 CHAPTER 218 : BODY PUMP
Picture 17



Source: Mangabat

In this excerpt (Picture 17), Giant encounters his mom on the way. His mom is going to the grocery store and immediately asks Giant to watch the house while she is out (FTA). She does not ask for Giant's willingness to do this. Giant immediately agrees to do mom's order.

Giant's mom: "I'm buying groceries. Watch the house for me." (FTA: **order**)

Giant: "Yes mom."

This part of the story shows that mom is highly superior toward Giant and Giant highly respects his mom, shown by his immediate agreement to do his mom's order without questioning anything. Filial piety is clearly demonstrated here.

4. Face Threatening Acts: Threatening the Speaker's Negative Face

This section highlights the FTAs that threaten the speaker's negative face. There is one value found here, which is 'silence is positive'.

Japanese Value: Silence is Positive

In these excerpts, it can be clearly seen that Japanese society treats silence positively. Saying must be preceded by careful thoughts. The two chapters analyzed here are chapters 65 and 126.

DORAEMON VOL.4 CHAPTER 65

Picture 18



Source: Manganelo

This part of the story (Picture 18) shows Nobita and Doraemon's visit to their relative's house. The owner of the house thanks Nobita and Doraemon for visiting him and his son.

Owner of the house: "Well, really appreciate your visit ... " (**FTA: expressing a thank**)

Doraemon: "not at all ... ehehehe"
(silence)

Here, the man who is the owner of the house, expresses his thank to Nobita and Doraemon, which will be likely to cause him to lose his freedom in the future. In the future, when Nobita and Doraemon ask for his help, it will be less likely for him to refuse it since he has received Nobita and Doraemon's kindness in the past. This FTA is followed by silence during the

conversation, which displays that silence is treated as a positive element in a conversation in Japanese culture. The characters in this story do not force themselves to speak when they have nothing to say in the conversation.

DORAEMON VOL.12 CHAPTER 216 : DRIED GHOST

Picture 19



Source: Mangabat

In this excerpt (Picture 19), Nobita is showing Shizuka his hidden place. While explaining the house, Shizuka remains silent.

Nobita: *"Here is my dining room. Here is my study (comic) room. Bedroom! Nobody will disrupt us here, and I can stay here peacefully. Shizuka, you also can make yourself at home."* (FTA: **making an offer**)

Shizuka: *"Oh, thank you."*

Here, Nobita gives an FTA by making an offer, which is then followed by a short response from Shizuka "Oh, thank you." During the whole conversation, Shizuka does not give any other response. It shows that silence is treated as something positive. It is not considered impolite not to give many responses during a conversation.

CONCLUSION

From the results and discussion part, it can be concluded that the FTAs that are mostly used in the dialogue in Doraemon are the ones that threaten the hearer's positive face and the hearer's negative face. For the Japanese value, the one mostly shown in the dialogue is filial piety. It might be caused by the fact that Doraemon is children story, with parents as the superior characters there.

It is clear that the story of Doraemon contains FTAs which then reveal the implicit culture of Japan, i.e. its cultural values. These values, which are contradictory to American values (explained in the Literature Review part) might be the source of Doraemon's unpopularity in the US. It is suggested that future studies use this current research to be the base of their examination on why Doraemon is unpopular in the US.

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