# The Representation of "The Other" in the Cartoon "My Brother Ozi"

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#### Abstract

It is rare for the characters in cartoons to be chosen among individuals who are considered minorities in society. Disabled characters are also among these minorities. In this context, the cartoon 'My Brother Ozi' which shows a characteristic of being the first Tv show for children in Turkey that give part to a disabled character in it, has been considered valuable for scientific research. The purpose of this research is to show how "the other" characters are represented in the cartoon named "My Brother Ozi". In the research, parts of the cartoon were subjected to document review. Afterward, the sections of the cartoon were scanned by watching it through the content analysis method. At the end of the study, it was concluded that the Ozi character reflects the appearance and speech of children with Down syndrome. Ozi's inclusive training, constant medical visits, and exercise for development are also unique to children with Down syndrome. In many media outlets, disabled people are depicted in a pitiful situation, while Ozi is portrayed as a strong character in the cartoon and it has been shown that children with Down syndrome can improve when they are given adequate support.

Keywords: cartoon, children, down syndrome, representation of the other, My Brother Ozi

#### 1. Introduction

The fact that disabled characters are rarely used in cartoons shows that these characters are marginalized. Therefore, it would be appropriate to dwell on the concept of "the other", which is the main subject of our research.

Many definitions have been made about "the other", which is the main subject of our research. Some of these definitions are given below:

In the Turkish Dictionary, the word 'öbürü' meaning "the other" is explained in several different meanings. Two of these are: "the one that is less important and in a lower position from the one that is mentioned or among the two similar objects" and "excluded in the current culture" (TDK, 2019). In the Dictionary of Philosophy, "the other" is expressed as "the other of the man meaning the woman or the other of the West, as mentioned in the Eastern examples, being in the opposite of a certain position or being at the opposite pole" (Cevizci, 1999). In the Anthropology Dictionary, the other is defined as "not from us" (Emiroğlu & Aydın, 2003).

"The other" is the one that differs against a certain group of people, but is generally on the opposite side and is seen as worthless and negative in the framework of binary opposition (Medin, 2018).

Based on the definitions, "the other" is different from the people we consider normal and is often regarded as negative. People always look at those who are different from themselves with different eyes. For this reason, these people, who are described as different in media organs, are not given much space. When given, these people are often represented as weak or pathetic characters, and their success is often overlooked. Here we encounter othering/marginalization.

Othering is a form of labeling that aims to exclude and pacify the segments that are defined differently in society. In other words, othering is a pressure exerted on groups that are outside the common thoughts of society's general value judgments. The most general characteristics of the others are that they are considered as a negative phenomenon and are marginal (Şeker & Şimşek, 2011). The fact that the others are rarely covered in mass media is a kind of result of this negative perception. disabled or problematic individuals who are different from us do not or rarely take part in the mass media and this causes these people to be pushed out of society. Then these individuals isolate themselves from society, become lonely and this situation prevents them from being successful and proving themselves in any field.

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Othering is a form of discrimination. This discrimination is reflected in people through the media. However, the fact that someone different from us is featured in the media will make people get used to these people in daily life. The individuals who think they are not different from others will try to achieve their goals. On the other hand, just the opposite will drive them away from their goals. We are surrounded by people with disabilities who are not isolated and who have achieved success. Giving these people more coverage in the media or people who are seen as different will make them more self-confident.

## 1.1 Studies on the Representation of the Disabled People in the Turkish Media

The concept of "the other" can be used for those of different races within the nation, as well as to refer to those with physical or mental disabilities. Since the main subject in our study is the representation of the disabled individuals, who is described as "the other" in the cartoon of My Brother Ozi, it would be appropriate to include studies on the representation of the disabled individuals in the media.

Some research on how people with disabilities are represented in the mass media were conducted in Turkey. A Research on Television Watching Tendencies of Disabled People was conducted by RTÜK in 2007. This research focused mainly on the problems of individuals with listening disabilities on TV channels and how programs for the disabled should be. As a result of the research, the TV channels do not provide solutions to the problems of the disabled, private television channels do not include programs for the problems of the disabled for the sake of ratings or partially included in the magazine format, some rare qualified programs are usually given very late, the problems of the disabled are dealt with more by creating a sense of emotional exploitation and pity, that they do not deal with the real problems of the disabled with the programs aimed at agitating the feelings of compassion of the audience, they aim to make a premium over the disabled, the TV channels think about their own interests by using the disabled people with the concern of rating, and the few programs that are produced are also very lacking, they are unqualified, the content of the programs generally broadcast during the week of the disabled is prosaic and not oriented towards understanding the real problems of the disabled and forming public opinion, it has been stated that the disability theme, which is used in IR programs, is very offensive to disabled people, that being disabled is presented as a divine punishment or atonement for the sins committed in the world, the disabled role models selected in the series are treated as imaginary characters, disabled people are viewed as inactive entities isolated from the society, isolated and confined to home (RTÜK, 2007).

In his master's thesis, Cinisli (2012) scanned the news related to disability in newspapers between 2005 and 2010 and found the existence of a perspective far from the social model approach towards disability.

Çobaner and Yıldırım (2015) examined disabled group pages on Facebook in their research. In the study, it was revealed that the disabled people in the digital world are not a homogeneous group just like in the real world and they contain many different interpretations within the concept of disability.

Paftalı (2013) evaluated the representation of disabled people in Turkish cinema between 1996-2013. He concluded that in eight out of ten films he examined, disabled characters were represented inappropriately. Disabled people were mostly distant from social life, and were represented as people who could not participate in daily life as much as "non-disabled" individuals.

In his master's thesis, Yamak (2020) analyzed the representation of the disabled people in some movies (1969-Aşk Mabudesi, 1973-Kambur, 1988-Arabesk, 1990-Zavallı, 2004-Yazı Tura, 2013-Tamam mıyız?). It was found that Turkish cinema in general reinforces the prejudice against disabled people and is effective in the continuation of the negative discourses on the disabled body.

Serttaş and Eral (2017) stated in their study that the media can be effective in developing the correct attitudes towards disabled people. They stated that the underrepresentation of people with disabilities in cartoons is a problem as this causes the development of deficient attitudes in healthy children towards disabled people and a representation problem for children with disabilities. As a result of the research, it was concluded that the broadcasts on national television channels handling this issue are insufficient. Among the publications they analyzed, most were about the "right to work and employment". The publications about disabled people are mostly made in the "Disability Awareness Week", in May and the "International Day of Persons with Disabilities" in December. It was also concluded that the news is mostly made in February, May, December, July, and April.

Sönmez, Karatekin, and Merey (2013) examined the extent to which national channels fulfill their responsibilities regarding disability rights. The researches carried out by 48 television channels on the disabled people and their rights were analyzed in 2012.

In his master's thesis, Yıldırım (2011) evaluated the presentation of news related to disabled people in the media in the context of accurate reporting. In the research, a total of 44 news about disabled people published in the

Hürriyet, Posta, Sabah, and Zaman newspapers at the specified time interval were included. It has been concluded that the rate of disabled news in these newspapers is less than 1 percent, and the news of the disabled people on their internet news site www.engellihaberleri.com, which were also examined in the study, were mostly not presented accurately.

In his research Kuyucu (2019) focuses on the importance of increasing the number of disabled people working in the media industry. He states that the presentations of disabled people in the media creates a negative judgment in society, and causes the individual to become alienated from himself or herself as well as society. This creates obstacles for a disabled individual to integrate in society. He states that the attitudes and behaviors of people with disabilities are also shaped by the negative messages of the media and combined with many factors that prevent disabled people from participating in society, cause them to be excluded from society.

Keneş (2015) stated that in many cartoons, the representation of mentally and physically disabled children rarely occurs. This review concludes that single-parent and/or divorced families, children of different religions, ethnic identities, and classes are not visible or ignored, because they are from "marginalized-minority" groups. (Keneş, 2015).

Based on the research we have conducted, we can also state that disabled people are often negatively represented and are poorly covered in the media. Disabled people are represented in the media as pathetic people, which causes them to marginalize.

# 1.2 Representation of the Disabled Persons in Cartoons

It is known that cartoons have an important place in the child's world in terms of being both entertaining and educational. As a matter of fact, according to the research conducted by Cesur and Paker (2007, p. 116) on primary education (1st-5th grades), cartoons are in the first place among the programs that children like most with view a rate of 41.6 %. Children are affected by the cartoons they watch. From this point of view, the importance of the careful selection of the subjects of the cartoons and their heroes become very clear.

Can (1997) stated that the most prominent element in a cartoon is the character of the movie. According to him, the popularity of cartoons is due to their characters. Children try to act like them by taking these characters as examples. Considering this situation, representation of standard characters come to prominence.

Cartoon producers take into consideration that their heroes are chosen among people who are frequently encountered in daily life, both in terms of appearance and psychology. For this reason, disabled characters that people see as different from themselves are not often included in cartoons. This situation causes disabled characters to be marginalized.

"My Brother Ozi" cartoon that broadcasts on TRT Kids, a state channel in Turkey, is one of the exceptions to this situation. "My Brother Ozi" has been a remarkable production that deals with the life of a child with Down syndrome and is the first example in Turkey in this regard. With this cartoon, it was aimed to raise awareness about Down syndrome. Regarding the issue, TRT Kids' Channel Deputy Coordinator İsmihan Yılmaz pointed out the importance of the disabled character to be included in the children's media and explained that the number of disabled characters will be increased within time with the following statements:

As TRT Kids, we act with the awareness of public broadcasting. This brings along the fact that we, as TRT Kids, address every layer of our target audience, are sensitive about the representation of all the groups including minorities in all our channels. We have to be careful and prioritize the productions related to our disadvantaged children. Representation of disadvantaged children in the media specifically for our target audience is a necessity of responsibility in this respect. My brother Ozi is one of the productions whose story is based on an original character that is a result of this point of view. Even if disadvantaged children constitute 1 percent of our target audience, we think that the representation of these children on screens and within every part of real-life is very important. Instead of presenting a child with Down syndrome as an isolated individual, we included these disadvantaged children just as one of the other characters just seen in other productions. Because this is real and natural. And we think that this effort will nurture and motivate the relationship our disabled children establish with each other in the natural flow of life in line with the iving together purpose. By his words he drew attention to the final goal of the project. (Children's New Friend Ozi, 2018).

Yılmaz tells the story of Ozi's emergence as follows:

"Ozi Project that started in 2014 was established along with clinical psychologists and two expert pedagogues. Also, our production teams made observations in a pre-school education institution that serves only our children with Down syndrome and an institution where co-education is given, just to define the character of Ozi accurately and carefully. As a result of this delicate work and experiences, this production came about." (Children's New

Friend Ozi, 2018).

As far as we understand from Yılmaz's words, My Brother Ozi cartoon is not an ordinary cartoon, but rather a product of meticulous work. Despite this, a mother complained about the character's physical appearance and speech of Ozi character and asked it to be taken off the broadcast, stating that her daughter's development was negatively affected by this cartoon. However, Down syndrome is a reality of life and children need to know that in real life they can meet people similar people to these kind of people that are different from the majority.

Othering is one of the most important problems in the world we live in. The fact that the representation of "the other" rarely occurs in cartoons is one of the indicators of this. Also, the scarcity of studies on the representation of "the other" makes the cartoon of My Brother Ozi, which is one of the cartoons featuring the representation of the "other", is worth to be analyzed.

#### 2. Method

The purpose of this study is to indicate how "the other" is represented in the cartoon named My Brother Ozi. In this study, the document analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. This technique is one of the qualitative research techniques in which both written materials and audio or visual electronic sources are examined and evaluated in line with the purpose of the research. This technique is a technique frequently used by linguists, sociologists, historians, and those who research many other fields (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013; Kara & Şıhlaroğlu Yıldırım, 2017). Within the scope of the research, the episodes of My Brother Ozi cartoon were watched.

No sample was taken in the study, and all episodes of the cartoon "My Brother Ozi" were watched.

Before starting the research, the literature was examined, and information was obtained by reading the articles, theses, and books published on the subject. Then, the parts of the cartoon were watched and scanned while conducting content analysis. Content analysis is a scientific approach that investigates the social reality by classifying the message contained in verbal, written, electronic or other materials objectively and systematically in terms of meaning and/or grammar, transforming it into numbers and making inferences (Tavṣancıl & Aslan, 2001). The features of "the other" in the cartoon have been determined.

The categorical content analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data. In this method, all of the episodes were examined by the categorical content analysis method. The main purpose of this analysis is to reach the concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

#### 3. Results

"My Brother Ozi" is a cartoon that tells the story of Ozan, who has Down syndrome. He is called shortly 'Ozi' by his family. The cartoon, which consists of 25 episodes, take an average of 11 minutes. This cartoon has been produced especially for the children with Down syndrome. In this cartoon, children with Down syndrome are not much different from other children and they also can learn things and should not be seen as inferior in society. The target audience of the cartoon broadcast on TRT Kids channel is preschool and primary school children.

As a result of the research, it was found that Ozi was different from other cartoon heroes with his appearance and some movements. In the "Ozi Produces Solutions" episode of the cartoon, Ozi's sister Duru stated that Ozi is a child with Down syndrome, with this statement the audience was ensured to understand the situation of Ozi.

"My brother Ozi is a child with Down syndrome." (1.29 sec.)

Ozi is an energetic but somewhat shy kid who is curious about learning and lives with his mother, father, sister, and grandfather. Ozi's mother, father, and grandfather are rational and guiding people who give all kinds of support to their children. Ozi's biggest assistant is his sister, as also emphasized in the name of the cartoon. Duru, Ozi's sister, is always beside him like a friend, constantly trying to teach him something new. After all, Ozi's family is a kind and understanding family. Ozi has a family that fully supports him. Having such a family, Ozi is able to develop positively.

Ozi is a little slow in learning, just like in real life individuals with Down syndrome, but with the support of his family, he can learn the things he wants to learn, albeit slowly. Since Ozi learns slowly, his family helps him to learn visually. Ozi, who started school at the age of 6, studies in an inclusive classroom. When we look at it in this context, we see that Ozi is not far behind in learning. This situation is expressed in the "Stubborn Ozi" section with the following statements:

The doctor says "A child in Ozan's situation can easily start school." (1.38sec-Stubborn Ozi)

Ozi's mother said:

"On the way, I stopped by Duru's school and talked to the principal lady. She said they had an inclusive education classroom and they would gladly accept Ozan." (1.46 sec.)

Individuals with Down syndrome who have different learning levels can learn when adequate support is provided, but as with normal individuals, each child's learning speed is different, some of them do not lag in learning, while others have difficulty in this regard.

Individuals with Down Syndrome are similar in appearance. Ozi also has a flat head, a short and wide neck, ears that are lower than normal, and slanted eyes. His hands are broad, his fingers are short and plump. He is short in height and slightly chubby. Children with Down Syndrome have a small mouth, but since their tongue is large, they may have problems turning their tongue in their mouth and have issues due to this while speaking. We also encounter these features in Ozi. Ozi's speech is a little different from the cartoon characters we are used to. He says some sentences in half. He speaks especially by skipping attachments. He mostly does not use question tags and his speech is slower than his peers. Below are some examples of Ozi's speech and the names of the episodes:

"Mom, God bless hands." (3.33sec-Stubborn Ozi)

"Grandpa, been to camp?" (2.35 sec. Ozi is Camping)

"Duru, you bored?" (6.20sec-Ozi Whistles)

Ozi goes to the doctor's controls constantly and needs to do various exercises. To correct his speech, he does exercises such as whistling and balloon blowing in the episode "Ozi Whistles".

One of the characteristics seen in individuals with Down Syndrome is stubbornness. One of the episodes of My Brother Ozi is called "Stubborn Ozi". Ozi is a very stubborn child. He insists on going to the same class with his older sister, and his insistence on not waiting for the coming summer to camp in the episode "Ozi is Camping" is one of the indicators of his stubbornness.

Another character who has similar characteristics to Ozi in the movie My Brother Ozi is Musti. Musti is a friend of Ozi from the class, he has also Down syndrome. Musti is similar to Ozi in appearance and also has speech difficulties like Ozi.

Another striking feature of the cartoon is the interest of teachers in Ozi. The teacher follows not only Ozi's mental development but also his physical development. Therefore, with the support of his class teacher, his physical education teacher teaches Ozi and Musti how to swim.

In the section named "Great Swimmers", the importance of swimming in muscle development is emphasized with the following sentence:

He says: "It will be very useful for Ozi and his classmate Musti's muscle development, so let's give them swimming lessons." (3.78 sec.)

## 4. Discussion

The other is everything that is outside of the dominant values in society, rejected or tried to be suppressed. Other; it is abnormal, threatening, and must be punished. The "other" is the unknown, the one that did not gain legitimacy and remained outside the circle. In various cultural studies such as social science, human science, and soul analysis, the "other" is defined as an awareness or sub-human in the face of a certain person or a certain group identity. In this sense, the other of the woman is the man, the other of the East is the West, the other of the speech is writing. The characterization or term other refers to the opposite of a certain position, situation, being, the always deemed unworthy wing of the opposing duality (Demir, 2008).

In cartoons, one of the most important programs for children, we often encounter familiar characters. In this regard, My Brother Ozi is different from other cartoons due to its characters. This cartoon is reminiscent of Punky, a foreign production. Punky is also a child with Down syndrome, but Ozan's parents live together whereas Punky lives in a broken family. While it is stated at the beginning of each episode in Punky that Punky has Down syndrome, it is not stated in My Brother Ozi. Apart from the fact that both Ozi and Punky have Down syndrome, they both have dogs. Also, there are a brother and a sister in both cartoons. From this point of view, we may assume that My Brother Ozi cartoon was slightly influenced by Punky.

Ozi appears as a strong character in the cartoon unlike "the other" characters featured in other TV programs. It does not cause a sense of pity in the audience, on the contrary, it shows that he can be like just as other children as he also has a strong character.

From watching My Brother Ozi cartoon, we can conclude that even with Down syndrome, children can overcome all kinds of obstacles when they are approached with interest and love. The problems of Ozi are mentioned in the

cartoon. The problems mentioned in the cartoon are Ozi's constant doctor's health checks, having to do body and tongue exercises, and having to be in an inclusive education. Mentioning these problems in the cartoon is very important in terms of guiding families with children with Down syndrome.

One of the facts revealed in the cartoon of My Brother Ozi is that individuals with Down syndrome can learn what other individuals learn and can become self-sufficient with additional education and family support. The presentation of Ozi as a strong character in the cartoon gives hope to both children with Down syndrome and their families.

As a result of the research, we can suggest the following:

The number of cartoons reflecting the problems of these children, which are still considered as a minority in our country, is very few. If we think from this point of view, this is a deficiency of our cartoon industry. Considering that cartoons are an important tool in the education of children, we can say that these cartoons should include more heroes, which are accepted as "the other" in real life. Including these heroes in cartoons will enable children to learn about real life, as well as to accept that there may be people different from them. Thus, these heroes are prevented from being excluded from society.

Children filter what they learn through the cartoons they watch, through their own experiences. When disabled children are included in cartoons, these children get the idea that they are not alone, they become happier and they look at life with hope. Also, the strong display of these characters in cartoons makes them more confident and encourages them to participate more actively in life.

While preparing cartoons like My Brother Ozi, it will be very useful to watch the heroes of these films in their real lives and produce them accordingly. In this way, these heroes will be represented just as how they are in real life.

Families should guide children to watch cartoons with different characters such as "My Brother Ozi". This orientation will help them to accept that there may be people who are different from them in real life.

Persons with disabilities should always be made aware that they are valued not only during "Disability Awareness Week" but also throughout the year. Also, these individuals should be employed in all areas of life, and job opportunities should be made suitable for them.

The real problems of people with disabilities should be expressed in cartoons and suggestions to solve these problems should also be included.

Programs for the disabled should be held at a time when the majority can watch.

Disabled characters should be portrayed as powerful characters, like Ozi, the hero of the cartoon My Brother Ozi, and people should be prevented from pitying these people.

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