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Children's Reading Difficulty and Their Perceived Misbehavior

ABSTRACT: *The greatest natural gift of a child as a growing and developing individual is the ability to learn. How good a child is in relation to reading and writing has been considered by many parents as a question they anticipate to encounter. The study sought to describe the 6-years-old children's reading difficulty and their perceived misbehavior. It is worthy to note that misbehavior is a complaint not only limited to teachers or other school personnel. Sometimes, even parents or carers themselves agree that their children are exhibiting misbehaviors. For gathering of data, in this study, parents/carers and teachers of participants were interviewed focusing on the checklist. Results indicate that children's learning difficulty in relation to reading is composed of attention, expressive reading, focusing on test, reading comprehension, and spelling. The behaviors occurring during reading sessions at home, among the respondents are grouped on four areas, such as: head, arm-hand, shoulder-waist, and waist-foot. Some carers, however, perceived these behaviors as misbehaviors. The study recommends that other areas of learning difficulty, especially concerning mathematics be explored. Aside from organizing modified group activities according to skills (for letter-sound recognition, proper blending, and reading comprehension with few words), explore and try-out some programs, which can be used as an alternative movement-based learning activity.*

KEY WORD: *Children; Parents and Teachers; Reading Difficulty; Misbehaviour; Learning Activity.*

INTISARI: *"Kesulitan Anak-anak dalam Membaca dan Perilaku Nakal yang Dirasakan Mereka". Karunia alam terbesar bagi anak sebagai individu yang tumbuh dan berkembang adalah kemampuan untuk belajar. Seberapa baik anak dalam kaitannya dengan membaca dan menulis telah dianggap oleh kebanyakan orang tua sebagai pertanyaan besar untuk mengantisipasi dan menghadapinya. Penelitian ini berusaha untuk menggambarkan kesulitan membaca anak-anak berusia 6 tahun dan perilaku nakal yang dirasakan mereka. Hal ini layak untuk dicatat bahwa perilaku nakal adalah keluhan tidak hanya terbatas pada guru atau petugas sekolah lainnya. Kadang-kadang, bahkan orang tua atau wali murid sendiri setuju bahwa anak-anak mereka menunjukkan perilaku nakal. Untuk mengumpulkan data, dalam penelitian ini, peserta orang tua/wali murid dan guru diwawancarai dengan fokus pada daftar nama-nama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesulitan belajar anak dalam kaitannya dengan membaca terdiri dari perhatian, membaca ekspresif, fokus pada tes, pemahaman bacaan, dan ejaan. Perilaku nakal yang terjadi selama sesi membaca di rumah, diantara para responden dikelompokkan pada empat bidang, seperti: kepala, lengan-tangan, bahu-pinggang, dan pinggang-kaki. Beberapa wali murid, bagaimanapun, menganggap perilaku ini sebagai kenakalan. Studi ini merekomendasikan bahwa area lain dari kesulitan belajar, terutama menyangkut matematika juga dieksplorasi. Selain menyelenggarakan kegiatan kelompok yang dimodifikasi sesuai dengan keterampilan (dengan surat pengakuan yang dibacakan, gabungan yang tepat, dan pemahaman bacaan dengan beberapa kata), mengeksplorasi dan menguji-cobakan beberapa program, yang dapat digunakan sebagai alternatif gerak berbasis aktivitas belajar.*

KATA KUNCI: *Anak-anak; Orang Tua dan Guru; Kesulitan Membaca; Perilaku Nakal; Kegiatan Belajar.*

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INTRODUCTION

A lot of times, 6-year-old children are classified as those having extreme behaviors. Some are labeled as too timid, excessively silent, very active, often noisy, and restless. These are the common observations of teachers, especially those who expect learners to behave well since they are already in the school. On this account, many teachers can only resort to finding a reason for their pupils' intolerable, if not unusual behaviors (*cf* Denney, Moore & Snyder, 2010; and Graves & Howes, 2011).

It is worthy to note that misbehavior is a complaint not only limited to teachers or other school personnel. Sometimes, even parents or carers themselves agree that their children are exhibiting misbehaviors. They also express their views concerning children's misbehavior as a manifestation of learning difficulty. Hence, alternative intervention techniques are equally important to be explored (Pedneault, 2009; and Bonci, 2011).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

The research attempted to describe and propose measures to reduce the learning difficulty and perceived misbehaviors of 6-year-old children. Specifically, it answered the following questions: (1) What is the learning difficulty of 6-year-old children in relation to reading as reported by the following: their parents and their teachers?; and (2) What are the misbehaviors of 6-year-old children as perceived by their parents/carers during reading sessions at home?

To clarify the content of the words used in the study, the following terms are operationally defined:

Attention – the act or process of directing the human senses, especially those of seeing and listening to specific experience or material for learning purposes.

Expressive reading – the attribute of the child's oral reading of a material, which suggests persuasion by using the tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions.

Focusing on test – the act of limiting or concentrating one's consciousness to answer

a particular test.

Learning difficulty – the child's failure to adjust when confronted with learning stimulations. The insufficient ability to absorb information or to express the corresponding reaction to different learning situations is measured by grades below 80 in reading subject.

Perceived misbehavior – a child's response, while he experiences learning difficulty in reading; a composition of random head-to-foot actions, which parents/carers find as unfavorable and an irritating conduct. The behavior is manifested in at least five seconds.

Reading comprehension – one's skill in understanding stories by using his imagination of what was read, then, using the ability to respond to questions.

Spelling – the ability to write or recite letters which represent a word.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Perhaps the greatest natural gift of a child as a growing and developing individual is the ability to learn. How good a child is in relation to reading and writing has been considered by many parents as a question they anticipate to encounter. Likewise, how he behaves is another very interesting question to expect. There is no problem if the answer to both foregoing questions is affirmative. Its opposing situation, on the other hand, gives an anxious experience for some, so much so that they begin to wonder (*cf* Kearney, 2006; and Click & Parker, 2009).

Children vary in their learning difficulties, when it comes to reading. Some may have problems on reading speed, while others may have low performance in expressive reading. Reading is not solely about recitation and speaking, it is more about focusing on test, attention, comprehension, among others that children may also find difficult to learn (Borba, 2010; Denney, Moore & Snyder, 2010; Lesley, 2012; and Titus, 2012).

On this account, there is a need to explore the specifics of learning difficulty in reading among 6-year-old children. Perhaps, it is during the experience of these difficulties,

Table 1:
Children's Reading Difficulty as Reported by Their Parents/Carers and Teachers

Parent's Report on Reading Difficulty	Child	Teacher's Report on Reading Difficulty
Spelling/Reading Comprehension/Focusing on Test.	A	Reading Comprehension/Spelling.
None.	B	Reading Comprehension.
Focusing on Test.	C	Attention/Expressive Reading/Focusing on Test/Reading Comprehension/Spelling.
Spelling/Reading Comprehension.	D	Reading Comprehension.
Spelling.	E	Reading Comprehension.

when children manifest unfavorable behaviors. Those who can observe these unfavorable behaviors, parents/carers, for example, easily get annoyed to perceive their children as misbehaving (*cf* Pedneault, 2009; Bonci, 2011; and Graves & Howes, 2011).

METHOD

The participants were composed of five Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children from the ITL (Institute of Teaching and Learning), who had academic marks lower than 80% in reading during the second quarter of School Year 2013-2014. Their adviser identified the pupils as having learning difficulties in reading. These difficulties cover attention, expressive reading, focusing on test, reading comprehension, and spelling (Koralek, 2010; Hamilton, Weimar & Luttgens, 2012; and Lesley, 2012).

The other method for the purposive selection of the participants was based on reports of their misbehaviors during reading sessions in the class, or at home as observed by their teacher/former teacher and parents/carers (*cf* Jorgensen, 1989; Halis, 2001; Kilbas, 2006; and Yildirim & Simsek, 2006).

Besides literature related to Brain Gym, the researcher developed a checklist on 6-year-old children's learning difficulties in reading and their misbehaviors (Dennison & Dennison, 1994). The researcher asked several pre-school/primary grade level teachers as well as experts, who have intensive trainings on the use of Brain Gym exercises for the content validation of the instrument. For gathering of data, parents/carers and teachers of participants were interviewed focusing on the checklist (Yildirim & Simsek, 2006; and Becker & Geer, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As reflected in table 1, on Reading Difficulty, most parents reported that their children have difficulties in Spelling, Reading Comprehension, and Focusing on Test. Only one parent claimed that his child did not have any difficulty. On the other hand, the teacher divulged that all of her pupils had difficulty in reading comprehension.

As to Child A, the teacher said that the pupil can read, but he had problems with comprehension. If the pupil was asked to read sentences or a paragraph with 50 words, the pupil can read only about 12 words (interview with Teacher A, 5/10/2013). Among the five respondents, this pupil had the most serious reading comprehension problem. In spite of this, however, Child A was good in mathematics.

An interesting point about this case is the pupil's limited ability to read each word. It was noted during an interview with the parent that Child A was frequently observed manifesting some hearing difficulty. When studying at home, the child would stare blankly at whoever was assisting him. The parent seems to have valid observations, because a teacher aide noticed the pupil's behavior inside the classroom. He recounts that when Child A was observed in Spelling, during the spelling activity, he was assisted by a practice teaching student all throughout the time. When the test was checked, he cried because his score was zero (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013).

When the class had to proceed, the practice teaching student took plenty of time to pacify the respondent. The pupil's hearing problem could be the reason, which inhibited his performance in Reading Comprehension

and Spelling. A damaged ability in hearing equates with a damaged recognition of sounds and words.

The parent of Child B did not entertain any idea that his son had reading difficulty. During the interview, the parent only accounted that his son remained playful even during his time for studies. Child B would always sit at the edge of the chair similar to a child who enjoys sliding (interview with Parent of Child B, 8/10/2013).

The teacher, on one hand, revealed that he was capable of reading, but cannot comprehend what he is reading. The pupil's difficulty was not evident, and probably lacks support in his studies. He needed follow-up assistance and supervision in the home so that he can accomplish his homework or assignment (interview with Teacher A, 5/10/2013).

Another proof that the child lacked attention from the carer is that he seemed unprepared when submitting school requirements. That is, from following directions on wearing school or PE (Physical Education) uniform up to bringing materials for certain projects. Though children at this age assert their autonomy in simple activities, they need increased attention especially from their parents. They begin to perform on their own, but they need support from others who would reassure them that what they are doing is accurate or proper (Hannaford, 1997; Kearney, 2006; and Pedneault, 2009).

This connotes that providing support to the education needs of children come in different forms. Food, books, and, even money or allowance, are not the only stuff needed by a learner. Time and how to use it is considered an investment of parents who want their children to imbibe the value of learning through schooling.

Child C, according to the parent, had difficulty towards Focusing on Test. This becomes more evident, when the child looks tired and irritable in performing mental exercises like answering questions in an assignment (interview with Parent of Child C, 15/10/2013).

The teacher, however, claimed that Child

C had all the reading difficulties, namely: attention, expressive reading, focusing on test, reading comprehension, and spelling. At any rate, the teacher quickly revealed that the above pupil was good in mathematics. She observed the learner's willingness to participate in the class. But, she reported prominence of the learner's different behaviors which she considered extra ordinary (interview with Teacher B, 12/10/2013).

When Child C is at the peak of his performance in an activity and feels no longer comfortable, it is more likely that he would ask for the teacher's permission to get out of the classroom. Outside the classroom, it is possible that he would go to the comfort room. During the interview, his former teacher in kindergarten recalled that the same pupil used to wear diapers. It is either he had bowel movement problems or he was distracted from learning activities inside the classroom. He also exhibited thumb-sucking behaviors during that time (interview with Teacher C, 19/10/2013).

These two episodes about pupils could indicate that they did not receive enough attention. During this foundation for formal schooling, the child is expected to begin learning the discipline of a typical grade schooler (*cf* Denney, Moore & Snyder, 2010; and Bonci, 2011). Nonetheless, on this account, does thumb sucking or making extra movement in the class indicate the learner's lack of discipline? Could it be the child's indirect way of telling the teachers that he needed further stimulation so he can exhibit better performance in the class?

As divulged by the parent during interview, Child D found difficulty in Spelling and Reading Comprehension (interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013). The teacher expressed a different view by specifying that child D had observable problems in Reading Comprehension. Like other respondents, he could read but he needed to comprehend what he was reading (interview with Teacher A, 5/10/2013). His case is quite similar to Child A, whose parent also assumed that his child may have mild difficulty in hearing (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013).

Table 2:
Children's Attention and Their Perceived Misbehaviors According to Parents

Number of children who exhibited the behavior according to parents	Perceived misbehavior
	ATTENTION
**	<i>Head:</i>
*	1. Moves eyeballs left to right or vice versa.
****	2. Moves eyeballs up and down or vice versa.
***	3. Moves the head.
*	4. Puts head on the table.
	5. Yawns.
	<i>Arm-Hand:</i>
*	1. Bites fingers/thumb.
**	2. Draws something.
***	3. Leans on the table.
**	4. Moves the chair.
*	5. Moves the fingers.
**	6. Plays pencil.
*	7. Puts hand on the face.
*	8. Puts hand on the head.
**	9. Rests chin on hands.
****	10. Scratches head.
***	11. Uses fingers for reading.
	<i>Shoulder-Waist:</i>
****	1. Leans on the chair.
***	2. Moves the body forward and sideward while reading.
	<i>Waist-Feet:</i>
*	1. Crosses legs.
**	2. Sits on the edge of an inclined chair.

The same problem could emerge as a potential hindrance for a learner's activities in reading. His behavior of simply staring at the book every time he reads could not be easily addressed. Even among some great scientists who have hearing problems, their parents felt resigned to the thought that their children are not fit for learning settings that are confined to reading, writing, and counting routines (*cf* Click & Parker, 2009; Bonci, 2011; Koralek, 2010; and Lesley, 2012).

Body movements could facilitate learning among school children. Traditional forms of discipline like sitting properly, following orders from teachers, and controlling body movement due to limited space in the classroom are not enough measures to enable children to learn. When the parent was asked about his child who used to rock the chair or crawl on top of the long table while inside the classroom, he admitted that they live in a house that does not have tables nor chairs (interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013).

The question was asked for an explanation of his child's behavior inside the room. The candidness of the parent served as enlightenment on the study. It is so liberating that this fact exists. A child who has the right to education is bothered by, if not suffering from, the challenges of poverty (interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013).

The teacher supported the revelation of the parent that they were residing in a slum area and were probably facing problems like malnutrition among others. The problem of the child became more serious, because its solution could not be provided by a school or any institution alone. The probable solution shifted from the educational to the social perspective (interview with Teacher A, 5/10/2013).

Child E's parent was last interviewed and he confided that the reading difficulty of his child was on Spelling. He asked his relatives and friends for their opinion on how to improve the spelling ability of his

Table 3:
Children's Focusing on Test and Their Perceived Misbehaviors According to Parents

Number of children who exhibited the behavior according to parents	Perceived misbehavior
	FOCUSING ON TEST
	<i>Head:</i>
*	1. Bows and touches the neck.
**	2. Looks around.
**	3. Looks at the ceiling.
***	4. Rests chin on the table.
*	5. Shakes the head.
**	6. Yawns.
	<i>Arm-Hand:</i>
**	1. Draws figures on test paper.
**	2. Plays with pencil.
**	3. Reads with fingers pointing.
*	4. Scratches the eyebrows.
**	5. Scratches the head.
**	6. Stretches arms upward.
	<i>Shoulder-Waist:</i>
**	1. Lies down.
**	2. Places feet on the chair.

child (interview with Parent of Child E, 29/10/2013).

But, his teacher asserted that the pupil had difficulty in Reading Comprehension. Despite this difficulty, Child E was good in *Sibika at Kultura* or Social Studies. This is because Social Studies for Grade I level is partial to memorization. It is about facts and does not require greater understanding on the part of the learner. He can have minor adjustments when an unconventional exercise like body movement is introduced to him (interview with Teacher D, 26/10/2013). See table 2.

On Attention, particularly with reference to the Head region, most parents divulged that their children used to move their heads left and right. This may indicate that they find difficulty establishing their attention in their studies, especially in reading activities. They even narrated that while reading, the kids would rest their heads on top of the table as if they were tired or resistant to perform the activity (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013; interview with Parent of Child C, 15/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child E, 29/10/2013).

Other parents observed that their children moved their eyeballs left and right, or upward or downward. Relative to the Arm-

Hand region, children were usually observed scratching their heads. Parents considered the behavior as mannerisms as if the kids were knocking their head to get ready for focusing themselves on their lessons. The parents also revealed that the kids used to lean on the table and were putting so much of their body weight on it (interview with Parent of Child B, 8/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013).

On this account, parents felt that their children were disinterested in reading (Koralek, 2010). Parents became more dismayed when they saw their children use their fingers for reading, rest the chin on their hands, and draw something while reading. Relative to their shoulder and waist, the children were frequently observed learning their back against the chair. While sitting, they used to move their bodies forward, sat erect moving back and forth. Parents remarked that the behaviors are not normal for children who are serious with their studies (Click & Parker, 2009; and Borba, 2010). See table 3.

In relation to the Focusing on Test, along Head region, parents became intolerant when they saw their children trying to rest their chin on top of the table. They did not want to see their kids exhibiting this

Table 4:
Children's Reading Comprehension and Their Perceived Misbehaviors According to Parents

Number of children who exhibited the behavior according to parents	Perceived misbehavior
	READING COMPREHENSION
	<i>Head:</i>
*	1. Looks at the ceiling.
**	2. Rotates head.
**	3. Yawns.
	<i>Arm-Hand:</i>
*	1. Bites bracelet.
**	2. Leans on the table.
***	3. Looks from left to right.
*	4. Places hand at chin.
*	5. Plays with pencil.
	<i>Shoulder-Waist:</i>
**	1. Slouches on the chair.
	<i>Waist-Feet:</i>
*	1. Crosses legs.
*	2. Kicks feet.
*	3. Places foot on the chair.
***	4. Raises one or two feet.
**	5. Sits on the edge of chair.

behavior for they looked dull in their studies. There were instances when children were caught staring at the ceiling, yawning or just looked around. Parents felt that their children were only wasting precious time, when they were supposed to think of answers and finish the test (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013; interview with Parent of Child C, 15/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child E, 29/10/2013).

Referring to the Arm-Hand region, there were children who would always scratch their head and stretch their arms upward. This could be an attempt to stay alert, while answering a seat work or homework. They also read with fingers pointing at words probably wanting to get and understand every detail of the test. Some of them were playing with their pencils which could be an act to find time for the correct answers. While searching for answers these children would draw figures on the test paper, hopefully finding time to relax in the midst of such demanding school activity (Click & Parker, 2009; and Denney, Moore & Snyder, 2010).

Parents did not see the behaviors that would facilitate children's focus on test taking. Relative to the Shoulder-Waist region, parents would not agree seeing their children lying down on the floor or bed when

they were in the testing activity. Some kids on the other hand, preferred to rest their feet on the chair. Parents, at this juncture, would reprimand their kids with the threat of applying an unfavorable discipline, physical punishment (interview with Parent of Child B, 8/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013). See table 4.

On Reading Comprehension, and as observed along Head region, parents observed that their children were rotating their head and at times would yawn. They seemed tired and sleepy when they exhibited this behavior (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013; interview with Parent of Child C, 15/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child E, 29/10/2013). Relative to the Arm-Hand region, children would continuously look around from left to right. They also leaned on the table and placed their hand on the chin. On watching the pupils' Shoulder and Waist region, one would see them slouching in the chair.

Parents considered this as children's strategy to spend the time waiting for answers in the exercise on reading comprehension. Watching their waist and feet, children seemed bothered with how to use the chair because they sat in different positions. They moved the chairs every now

Table 5:
Children's Spelling and Their Perceived Misbehaviors According to Parents

Number of children who exhibited the behavior according to parents	Perceived misbehavior
** ** ***	SPELLING (Oral) <i>Head:</i> 1. Closes eyes. 2. Moves eyes side to side. 3. Looks around.
**	<i>Arm-Hand:</i> 1. Scratches head.
** *	<i>Head (Writing-Sitting):</i> 1. Puts chin on the table. 2. Moves eyes side to side.
* *	<i>Arm-Hand:</i> 1. Plays with pencil. 2. Writes nonsense.

Table 6:
Children's Expressive Reading and Their Perceived Misbehaviors According to Parents

Number of children who exhibited the behavior according to parents	Perceived misbehavior
*	EXPRESSIVE READING (Standing) <i>Head:</i> 1. Looks around
*	<i>Shoulder-Waist:</i> 1. Shrugs shoulder
*	1. Stomps feet

and then, or they sat on the edge of chair as if they were trying to test their balance. While sitting, the kids also kicked their feet. This behavior probably helped reduce their tendency to fall asleep (interview with Parent of Child B, 8/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013). See table 5.

During the Spelling test and along the Head region, parents observed that their children constantly looked around, moved their eyes from left to right or vice versa, or opted to close their eyes. Seemingly, they exerted efforts to recall the series of letters that compose every word, which they may have memorized (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013; interview with Parent of Child C, 15/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child E, 29/10/2013). With regard to their arms and hands, children tended to scratch their heads. Along the Head region, while sitting and writing they would rest their chin on top of the table. There were also instances when they moved their eyes

from left to right.

Parents would recall that children preferred to take an extra minute to utilize a strategy on recalling details so as to spell out a word. As to the arm and hand area, the children took time to play with their pencil or to write anything without any sense or value to the spelling activity. Parents considered the above behaviors as futile efforts to get the correct spelling of a word (interview with Parent of Child B, 8/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child D, 22/10/2013). See table 6.

In the reading activities of the respondents, they seemed to exhibit less behavior, which manifested difficulty in Expressive Reading. While standing and on observing the Head region, children would attempt to look around. Observing the Waist-Foot region, there were children who would resort to stomping their feet (*cf* Graves & Howes, 2011; and Titus, 2012).

Parents felt that the kids found it difficult

to read with emotion. They were probably so conscious that they cannot focus on what they were reading (interview with Parent of Child A, 1/10/2013; interview with Parent of Child C, 15/10/2013; and interview with Parent of Child E, 29/10/2013). On observing the Shoulder-Waist area, there were children who would shrug their shoulders. This may indicate being repressed with their expression by the use of correct tones and accents they moved their body parts instead. While sitting and performing expressive reading, they either touched their head or scratched their feet. This may also indicate tensions when they were asked to read aloud with expression (cf Borba, 2010; and Denney, Moore & Snyder, 2010).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has found out that reading comprehension and spelling are the most common learning difficulties in reading among 6-year-old children. The other difficulties in relation to reading are attention, expressive reading, and focusing on test. Furthermore, it was found out that learning difficulties in reading can be manifested through various behaviors. These behaviors are grouped and can be observed on four areas, such as head, arm-hand, shoulder-waist, and waist-foot. Some carers, however, perceived these behaviors as misbehaviors.

It is, therefore, recommended that another research be conducted to further identify the learning difficulties in reading and the perceived misbehaviors of other children using the checklist constructed by the proponent of this study. Exploring other areas of learning difficulty, especially concerning mathematics, may be of interest to other researchers. Aside from organizing modified group activities according to skills (for letter-sound recognition, proper blending, and reading comprehension with few words), explore and try-out movement-based programs which can be used as alternative learning undertakings.¹

¹**Statement:** I would like to declare that this article is my own original work; so, it is not product of plagiarism and not yet also be reviewed and published by other scholarly journals.

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