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IDENTIFICATION AND REDUCTION OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING DIFFICULTY AND THEIR MISCONSTRUED MISBEHAVIOR

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Identification and Reduction of Children's Learning Difficulty and Their Misconstrued Misbehavior

Synopsis:

The researcher identified that reading comprehension is the most common learning difficulty of grade I pupils. The learning difficulties in reading can be manifested through misconstrued misbehavior. To reduce the children's learning difficulty and their misconstrued misbehavior, other than organizing modified group activities according to skills, The Brain Gym program can be used as an alternative movement-based learning activity.

IDENTIFICATION AND REDUCTION OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING DIFFICULTY AND THEIR MISCONSTRUED MISBEHAVIOR

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Abstract

There is a need to explore the specifics of learning difficulty in reading among Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children. Perhaps it is during the experience of these difficulties when children manifest unfavorable behaviors. Those who can observe these unfavorable behaviors, teachers for example, easily get annoyed to judge their pupils as misbehaving. For gathering of data, researcher used a checklist to observe one respondent-child every scheduled reading class. Likewise, parents/carers and teachers of participants were interviewed focusing on the checklist. The learning difficulty in relation to reading among grade I pupils are attention, expressive reading, focusing on text, reading comprehension, and spelling. The misconstrued misbehaviors manifesting the learning difficulty in relation to reading among the respondents are grouped on four areas such as head, arm-hand, shoulder-waist, and waist-foot. For reduction of children's learning difficulty and their misconstrued misbehaviors, movement-based learning exercise can be used as additional intervention. Teachers shall create appropriate activities for pupils' misconstrued misbehavior to address a learning difficulty in reading lessons.

Key Concepts: Learning Difficulty; Misconstrued Misbehavior

INTRODUCTION

A lot of times, Grade I pupils or 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.

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. Within this purview, a new way of looking at children's misbehavior as a manifestation of learning difficulty and its corresponding intervention techniques are equally important to be explored.

Statement of the Problem

The research attempts to identify and propose measures to reduce the learning difficulty and misconstrued misbehaviors of Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is the learning difficulty of Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children in relation to reading as reported by the following:
 - a.) their parents, and;
 - b.) their teachers?
2. What misconstrued misbehaviors manifest learning difficulties of Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children based on the following:
 - a.) as observed by their parents/carers during reading sessions at home, and;
 - b.) as observed by the researcher in the reading class?
3. What intervention technique can be proposed to reduce children's learning difficulty and their misconstrued misbehavior?

Conceptual Framework

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.

On this account, there is a need to explore the specifics of learning difficulty in reading among Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children. Perhaps it is during the experience of these difficulties when children manifest unfavorable behaviors. Those who can observe these unfavorable behaviors, teachers for example, easily get annoyed to judge their pupils as misbehaving.

If misbehavior is taken in cognizance as a hostile mechanism to get someone's attention, an act of vengeance, or to strive for superiority, it is probable that misbehavior could mean something else. In this light, misbehavior which is usually recognized as distressing can be

viewed with optimism. It can be viewed as indicating a favorable need for action, a call for alternative process to achieve learning.

As misbehavior can be a manifestation of learning difficulty, an experience when children fail to adjust in order to learn, it is hereby proposed that one ponder on the idea that misbehavior can be considered a learning cue. Hence, teachers have to put premium on considering these cues for the facilitation of learning among pupils.

METHODOLOGY

The participants were composed of five Grade I pupils or 6-year-old children from the Institute of Teaching and Learning (ITL) 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. 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. For gathering of data, parents/carers and teachers of participants were interviewed focusing on the checklist. Likewise, using the checklist, the researcher observed one respondent-child every scheduled reading class.

The exercises proposed by the researcher are related to the Brain Gym Program which was introduced by Paul Dennison (1994). The researcher consulted experts who regularly use the Brain Gym Program for careful selection of exercises to reduce children's learning difficulty and their misconstrued misbehavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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.

Attention

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. 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. On this account, parents felt that their children were disinterested in reading. 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 leaning 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.

They exhibited so many movements along the Waist-Feet region. While composing themselves for attention to activities, students enjoyed rocking their chair, seemingly searching for their balance beyond the normal limits. They seemed wanting to stimulate their consciousness to get ready for participation in class activities. Many students were seen resting their feet on the chair. They probably wanted to feel the heat of their knees while flexing their leg and thigh muscles. This behavior can increase their wakefulness well enough to respond to the proceedings of the lesson. Another sign of searching for their balance is the students' preference to sit on the edge of an inclined chair. It is as risky as when they rock the chair because they may fall on the floor with their butt, their head or the back portion of their body first.

Focusing on test

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 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. 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. 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.

The pupils exhibited only few behaviors relative to Focusing on Test. With reference to the Waist-Feet region, the children seemed to enjoy sitting on the edge of inclined chairs while focusing on the test. Similar to previous observations, they felt comfortable establishing their focus in a risky manner. This awkward behavior probably provided them with a more stimulating feeling so they could respond to the test. It may create a more challenging activity for the brain, while, their bodies had to move in a clumsy position, thus exposing them to the tendency of suffering from accidents which involve their bones and muscles. The researcher was always on the verge of calling the pupils' attention so they would refrain from sitting on the inclined chair. Along the same area, one pupil was seen rocking the chair, another behavior which required the learner to use his sense of balance.

With reference to the area on Arm and Hand, the pupils were caught playing with their pencils. They were manifesting extra movements from the said region, especially, the hand, so they could maintain their wakefulness and stay directly focused on the activity. It may be hard to fathom, but seemingly for these children, focusing on the test was just like another paper and pencil test, and was not limited to using one's sense of sight. Of course they can respond to tests by reading the text of the exercise using their eyes, but with their hands also holding something and moving, or, playing with the said object. Going to the Shoulder-Waist region, one pupil was seen slouching on the chair. His body was in a slanting position very close to a normal sleeping position. This gives sensation with partiality to the spine and could facilitate the learner's concentration on answering the test.

Reading Comprehension

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. 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 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.

The researcher observed that pupils exhibited plenty of behaviors involving the Arm-Hand region. While performing the reading comprehension activity, top on the list of behaviors was of students drawing something on any paper. Were the students' sketches a representation of what they were reading? Did they create these images to relate with the story that they tried to grasp? The answers to these questions may lead one to think that this is how pupils attempt to stimulate their sense of imagination. They want to draw pictures. They want to portray actions which could serve as a synthesis of the story. However, while doing these, some pupils were observed playing with a bottle or with rubber bond. This behavior can be considered a sign of boredom or, probably, a signal of children's anxiety. On the Waist-Feet area, many students were seen rocking their chairs. Some were observed sitting on the edge of an inclined chair or sitting on the arm rest. These three behaviors could represent the children's mechanisms to understand what they were reading. When they unconsciously lost their balance this increased or triggered their ability to comprehend. This is a phenomenon which requires further observation and deeper explanation. Along the same region, there were children who were seen putting their feet on the chair or crossing their legs. These could be behaviors which drove them to stretch their muscles in the lower part of their body, thus, enabling them to stimulate their focus on reading comprehension.

Spelling

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. 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. Observing the pupils' Waist-Feet region, they were frequently seen rocking the chair or sitting on the edge of the chair. To ordinary observers, it may suggest that the pupils were experiencing restlessness. Some children would opt to bounce, or shake their legs or, sit on the edge of a chair while it was inclined. These behaviors apparently stress the idea that the children were creating these movements to facilitate the integration of their senses.

The researcher observed that, relative to the Head region, there were children who tended to bend and drop their body to rest their chin on the table. This gives the opposite idea that, as children show clumsy and aggressive behaviors, their body would tend to work in an ascending manner where they would appear relaxed or look uninterested. There were observations that individually, pupils resorted to biting their fingers or their hands, or to moving their eyes side to side. This may be an attempt for them to control some complexities on the body so as to trigger some sort of sensation. On observing the Arm-Hand region, children were caught playing with their pencils. This further indicates how active their body systems are and probably shows of inducing their spelling skills.

Expressive Reading

In the reading activities of the respondents, they seemed to exhibit less behavior which manifested difficulty in Expressive Reading. Observing the Waist-Feet region, there were children who would resort to stomping their feet. 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. 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.

Pupils exhibited a lot of behaviors on the area of Arm-Hand (while sitting). Many of them were observed biting pencils as well as biting their fingers. It is so unthinkable that, while doing expressive reading they would do other things which involve their mouth area. It may mean they were trying to cope with the stressful situation which required efforts to concentrate and be expressive at the same time. Observed on their Waist-Feet region, respondents were caught stomping their feet while standing to do expressive reading. It is more likely that pupils were drawing strength by engaging in some activity of their feet to reduce their jitters. It is worth emphasizing that among the reading activities, it was exclusively along this area that children demonstrated their performance while standing. Normally, learners find it difficult to stand before the class because they become very conscious and worried about how their classmate-observers would evaluate their performance. Concerning the Shoulder-Waist area, there were observations that the respondents would touch or scratch their nape. This could be an indication that the respondents were becoming unwilling to participate in expressive reading. While standing, and relative to the area of Arm-Hand region, there was one child who was caught with

his mouth widely opened as if yawning. This may suggest that he was not ready for the said activity.

Table 1: Grade I Pupils’ Specific Learning Difficulties and their Respective Brain Gym Activities

Attention	Expressive Reading	Focusing on Test	Reading Comprehension	Spelling
The Elephant	The Active Arm	Space Buttons	Brain Buttons	Balance Buttons
The Owl			Earth Buttons	Double Doodle
The Rocker			Space Buttons	
			The Gravitational Glider	
			The Rocker	

The researcher proposes that the Brain Gym Program be used for learners who have reading difficulty. Developed by Paul Dennison (1984), the program promotes the idea that learning humps can be addressed by carrying out specific movements which stimulate pathways in the brain. It is anchored on educational philosophy of Jean Piaget and the sensory integration concept of educators Maria Montessori, Anna Jean Ayres and pediatrician Arnold Gesell. Listed above are the specific reading difficulties and the corresponding Brain Gym activities.

Conclusions

1. Reading comprehension is the most common learning difficulty of Grade 1 pupils.
2. Learning difficulties in reading can be manifested through various behaviors. Some carers however considered these behaviors as misbehaviors.
3. To reduce the children’s learning difficulty and their misconstrued misbehaviors, other than organizing modified group activities according to skills (for letter-sound recognition, proper blending, and reading comprehension with few words), the Brain Gym program can be used as an alternative movement-based learning activity.

Recommendations

1. Identify the learning difficulties in reading and the misconstrued misbehaviors of school learners using the checklist constructed by the researcher.
2. Explore other areas of learning difficulty, especially, concerning mathematics.
3. Try-out Brain Gym Program in different types of learners.
4. Teachers shall create appropriate activities for pupils' misconstrued misbehavior to address a learning difficulty in reading lessons.

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