

# EMOTION, REACTION, PERMISSION: A CASE STUDY ON HOW CHILDREN RESOLVE TURN-TAKING DILEMMAS

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## Abstract

Play is an integral part in a child's formative years. As the child grows in age, he or she tends to participate more in activities that involve socio-emotional interaction with other children. Turn-taking now becomes a constant factor in these experiences. However, some encounter turn-taking difficulties in sharing toys, talking with each other, among others. A few studies have been made regarding how children resolve turn-taking dilemmas in the context of drawing. This case study aims to look into how children with special needs resolve problems in turn-taking through drawing. We used triangulation in gathering data for the study, namely: observation, drawing, and interview. Two (2) male children – one diagnosed with ADHD and the other, diagnosed with ASD comorbid with ADHD, and one (1) female at-risk for ADHD were asked to draw situations in response to social stories showing events that lead to a turn-taking response. The participants were further asked to describe their thoughts and emotions in relation to their drawings. Three dimensions emerged: emotion, reaction, and permission. These reveal the depth of how these children with special needs resolve turn-taking dilemmas. We have learned that despite the participants' diagnoses, they showed socially-acceptable ways of resolving predicaments in turn-taking.

**Keywords:** problem solving, turn-taking, children with special needs, cognitive

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## INTRODUCTION

In the highly technologically advanced world that we now live in, we see children as young as four years old who are already tech-savvy. However, drawing is still one of the activities that they do. Drawing, scribbling, and doodling are fun and interesting activities for children. It is the depiction of children's creativity, a means of channeling their imagination, and more importantly, it is an outlet of their emotions, and a mirror of their personality. Furthermore, it is considered as a reflection of their experiences, their cultural and familial backgrounds. The upbringing and environment children grow up in affect the way they perceive things. Therefore, making-meaning, their decision making and problem solving skills are also

affected. One of the ways in which we can clearly see the diversity of children is also through drawing.

### Children's Drawings

Angelides and Michaelidou (2009) conducted a study where they implemented a technique of discussing around drawings that will enable them to understand and identify children who experience or are currently experiencing marginalization. Through the children's drawings and discussion about their work, many hidden dimensions of children's school life that are not typically seen at face value were revealed. We can learn a lot from children through their drawings such as their thoughts, experiences, and feelings. In a study

done by Misailidi, Bonoti, and Savva (2011), children of different age groups showed their understanding of loneliness through drawings. Results from this study showed that the oldest age group, comprised of 11-year-olds, have an understanding that individuals can still feel lonely even when around other people; as compared to the younger age groups of seven- and nine-year-olds whose works usually showed a lone human figure with a sad facial expression which reflected that their understanding of loneliness is not associated with “the absence of a social network or other social deficiencies” (Misailidi et al., 2011, p. 531). Similarly, in a study conducted by Woolford, Patterson, Macleod, Hobbs and Hayne (2013) showed that children like to draw during interviews presumably because drawing makes them feel more comfortable. The findings of the study showed that children with mental health problems reported almost twice as much information when they were allowed to draw during the interview than children who told only, making drawing an effective tool in getting information about the presenting problems of children’s mental health.

### ***Turn-taking in Children***

Turn-taking is an important part of social interaction and could be seen in different social settings, most especially in school. When children are in school, turn-taking is present inside and outside the classroom. This can be observed in simple activities such as when children line up, buy in the canteen, share toys, and talk with each other. However, it is a common issue encountered by them. From it, problems in social skills such as in the areas of communication and behavior could arise and eventually lead to poor social integration.

Turn-taking is a skill that children develop as they mature. This skill entails considering the perspective of others or simply just waiting. These are areas that may be difficult for children with special needs. Children with ASD often have difficulties with understanding other people’s points of view and those with ADHD tend to be impulsive and have difficulty waiting. Several studies explored the effectiveness of social communication intervention. Findings in the study of Stanton-Chapman et al. (2012) showed that social communication intervention resulted in an

increase in initiations with an immediate peer. Social communication intervention was also found to be an effective strategy in promoting turn-taking skills in preschool children with special needs (Stanton-Chapman and Snell, 2011).

In relation to this, the findings of the study conducted by Alavi, Savoii, and Amin (2013) revealed that social skills training reduced the aggression of children with mental retardation. Moreover, social skills training plays a vital role in the manner where children interact with their peers, parents, teachers, and the society.

### ***Social Stories***

One of the tools that were found effective to use in addressing problem behaviors is social stories. According to Delano and Snell (2006):

A social story is a short story that describes the salient aspects of a specific social situation that a child may find challenging. Social stories also explain the likely reactions of others in a situation and provide information about appropriate social responses. (p. 29)

The findings of a study conducted by Kalyva and Agaliotis (2009) showed that social stories can help children with learning disabilities overcome their interpersonal conflict resolution problems, as well as increase their social competence and their social integration. Further, another study done by Schneider and Goldstein (2010) revealed that using social stories together with visual schedules contribute in increasing on-task behavior for children with autism.

A few studies have been made regarding turn-taking in the context of drawing and in the aspect of problem solving in social settings. This study aims to answer the central question “How do children with special needs resolve dilemmas in turn-taking through drawing?” The participants of this study were three children at-risk and diagnosed with special needs ages 7-11 years old. They were presented with three turn-taking situations and asked to show their resolution through drawing. After the drawing activity, the participants underwent an interview to further describe and expound on their drawings.

## METHOD

### *Research Design*

In this study, we utilized a case study design to gain a deeper understanding of how three children – diagnosed and at-risk for special needs – resolve problems in turn-taking.

### *Subjects and Study Site*

In this study, we had ten-year old and eleven-year old male participants, and a seven-year old female participant as seen in Table 1. Child A is a ten-year-old boy diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) comorbid with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). On the other hand, Child B is an 11-year-old boy diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Finally, Child C, a seven-year-old girl, is at-risk for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The participants were selected after meeting two qualifications: (1) diagnosed or at-risk with having special needs and; (2) capable of verbal communication. The actual data collection took place in the participant’s home. Child A and Child B both live in Mandaluyong City and Child C is from Fairview in Quezon City. The data collection all occurred in their respective receiving areas at home.

*Table 1 Profile of the participants*

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade Level	Diagnosis
Child A	10	Male	4	ADHD comorbid ASD
Child B	11	Male	5	ADHD
Child C	7	Female	2	At-risk for ADHD

### *Data Measure / Instrumentation*

A three- part instrument was prepared to gather data and information necessary in the study. The first part is called the participant’s robotfoto, which was made to acquire basic information such as the participants’

age, gender, and date of birth, accomplished by the participants themselves. Attached to the robotfoto is the information sheet to be accomplished by the parents to confirm and gain more information regarding the child. Included in this information sheet are: language spoken at home, ordinal position in birth, diagnosis, date of diagnosis, and services received. To complete the three-part data measure, three sets of social stories were read to the participants accompanied by sets of interview questions. The social stories used as an instrument in our study were adapted from Despert’s Fables in 1946. According to Fine (1948), these fables are used as an assessment to children for clinicians to have an impression on how well their interpersonal relationship is. These fables were also used for examinees to obtain more information and clarify data that are vague and further understand what is being kept by a child since fables are generally adored by children.

### *Data Gathering Procedure*

We conducted a pilot test to check for feasibility and appropriateness of social stories and the questions. We also wanted to identify and correct the possible issues that may arise during the actual data collection. The pilot testing transpired in St. Joseph’s College, Quezon City where two students were our participants. Child A being an eight-year-old girl diagnosed with Sensory Processing Disorder comorbid with Dyslexia. Meanwhile, Child B is a nine-year-old boy diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

During the actual collection of data, one representative of our research team conducted the intervention individually with each participant while the rest of us observed and recorded observational data. Prior to presenting the social story, we asked the participant what his/her favorite toy is and used it as an element in the story. After each social story, the child was asked to draw the solution in the perspective of the character. Finally, a set of interview questions related to the set of social stories were asked in accordance to the child’s perspective. These questions were answered by the child verbally.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The parents of the participants who participated in this qualitative case study were provided with consent forms. All parents were fully informed about the

purpose of the research and assured of their child's anonymity. Before conducting the pilot test and the actual test, we sent out a letter of request to the parents of the participants. Attached in the letter was a sample robotfoto and information sheet. Part of the letter of request, audio and video recording will be necessary for documentation. With the permission of the parents, data were collected on the schedule set agreed upon by us and the parents. To ensure that the agreement was followed, the audio and video recording was reviewed by the parents.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The audio-recorded interviews were individually transcribed to come up with the field text. Afterwards, we reduced the field text through the construction of the with-in and cross-case analysis table and the repertory grid. These were created to allow us to identify both cool and warm analyses. The cool analysis included the significant statements or verbalizations from each participant. These statements were the backbone of the warm analysis stage where we formulated the data categories and themes emerged. To validate the emerged themes, we employed the member checking procedure and used correspondence with each of the study participants to clarify and verify the transcription.

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Time of preparation for the intervention***

Before the intervention, Child A was constantly reminded for three days about the upcoming intervention, with the aim of conditioning him and avoiding any tantrums. Child B was informed by the mother only on the day of the intervention, just after the child woke up. Since Child B was only informed that moment, he was not well prepared to do the task for the reason that he was looking forward to another set activity for that day. Child C, however was only informed right before we conducted the intervention.

### ***Time of day of intervention***

The times of day of the intervention were not the same for all the participants due to the availability of the researchers and participants. The intervention was conducted to Child A and Child C in the evening,

while for Child B the intervention took place in the morning.

### ***Behaviors during the intervention***

In the event of the data gathering, we have observed various behaviors from each of the subjects during the intervention. Child A seemed to be very comfortable when drawing. This was evident when he would sit in different positions that he liked. Moreover, when asked to describe his drawing, he would explain in a very descriptive manner and was not hesitant to use a variety of coloring materials such as colored pens, colored pencil, and pencil. For the first drawing, he occupied only the upper left part of the paper. However, after being reminded, Child A utilized the whole page for his second and third drawing. Child B was also comfortable during the intervention but seemed to show shyness. This behavior was observed through the manner he answered our interview questions. He mostly answered with one-word or very short sentences, even after he was prompted to expound his answers. Among all of the materials we provided, he only used the pencil even after being encouraged to use all other different coloring materials. All three of his drawings were small and were located at the bottom part of the paper. Similar to Child A, Child C also seemed comfortable during the intervention, which was evident in her sitting position and the manner she spoke during the interview. Aside from the pencil, she also utilized the colored pencil however, her drawings were small but were positioned at the center of the paper. In contrast to Child A, Child B and C's drawing reflected how they imagined the situation as opposed to copying what was in the instructional material.

From the cool and warm analyses of the study, findings of this qualitative study have surfaced interesting themes namely, Emotion, Reaction, and Permission. These describe the responses of all the participants as seen in their individual insights and experiences. Specifically, the themes, which is a derivative of the significant statements and verbalizations of the three participants, clearly describe how children with special needs resolve problems in turn-taking

Different drawings (See Figure 1) were depicted by the participants. Images include objects such as a chalkboard, chairs, tables, toys; expressions such as

smiling, angry and mischievous faces with speech bubbles.

### **Emotion**

As displayed in the study, the emotional dimension refers to what the children feel towards another child grabbing the toy. Based on the participants' responses, negative emotions would arise when faced with such situations.

The participants' drawing reflected their different emotions towards another child grabbing the toy they are playing with. For Child A, he drew an angry boy with his hand raised and says "Nona please give me back my car please" to a girl holding the toy car with a mischievous facial expression. As for Child B, he drew a boy with a sad face and a girl holding the toy gun. Child C drew a girl and a boy with both hands on the toy, but with no facial expressions. Similar with the other drawings, only Child A used color in his drawing and both Child B and C used stick figures.

For the interview, the participants were asked how they would feel if someone suddenly gets the toy they are playing with and their responses varied as indicated by the following statements:

Angry. Because he took it from me. Chase him, then catch him. Took it – uhm "Excuse me can I get my toy car back?"

Sad. Pagsasabihan ko nalang sila na ibalik sa akin. (I would tell them to give it back to me.) Papahiramin ko nalang sila. (I would just lend it to them.)

Malulungkot ako saka iiyak. (I would be sad and I would cry.) Wag mong agawin yung laruan ko. Isumbong kita kay Mama. (Don't get my toy, I shall tell my mother about this.)

### **Reaction**

The reaction dimension denotes the responses of the children to another child borrowing or grabbing the toy.

All the participants' drawing indicated a child sharing the toy. Only Child A drew the facial expressions of the characters with a smiling face and speech bubbles to convey the dialogue "May I borrow please? "Yes you may." On the other hand, Child C wrote the dialogue "Pwede kitang paheramin ng laruan kong

lutulutoan" (I can let you borrow my cooking play set.) before proceeding to draw two children sitting on chairs and sharing a table. Both Child B and Child C used stick figures in their drawings. Child A colored his drawing while Child C used a different color of colored pencil.

The participants' drawing matched with their answers to the interview questions. When asked what they would do or say if a child wants to borrow their toy, all the participants expressed that they would allow another child to borrow their toy. These were expressed in the following statements:

Yes, but they need to say 'please' first.

Sige papahiram ko sayo (Okay, I will let you borrow.)

Edi sige, pero wag mo lang sisirain ha (Okay, just do not break it.)

When asked what they would do if they were the ones wanting to borrow someone's toy, the participants uttered polite expressions through the following comments:

You say – I will say "May I borrow please?"

Pwede pong sumali sa inyo sa laro? (May I join you in playing?)

Pwede ba akong manghiram sayo ng laruan? (May I borrow your toy?)

### **Permission**

The permission dimension refers to how children will ask for approval to borrow a toy or join a game, and how children will give approval to another child joining the game.

All the participants' drawing showed asking permission when wanting to join a group of friends playing. Child A used smiling faces and speech bubbles to express "May I join your group please" "Yes!" Child B drew a group of friends and another person with one hand raised towards the group. Child C drew a girl approaching a group of friends playing with a cooking set. Both Child B and C used stick figures in their drawings while only Child A used colors in his drawing.

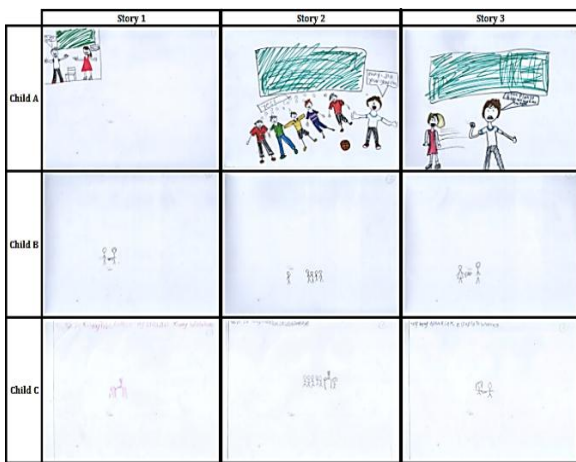
During the interview, the participants were asked what they would do if they would want to join a group of friends playing. They indicated the following commentaries:

Uhm, may I, can I join your group please?

You want me to join?

Pwede ba ako makisali? Hindi ko naman sisirain yung luto-lutuan ninyo eh. (May I join? I won't break your cooking set.)

Figure 1 Participants' drawings



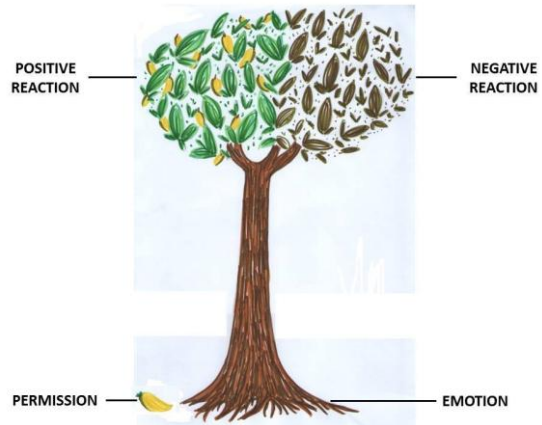
Based on the interpretations of the drawings from the interview, the participants showed a socially acceptable manner of relating to others in terms of turn-taking. The drawings showed that they are going to allow another child to borrow their toy with conditions; they are going to ask permission to join a group; and feel bad when others grab their toy during play. To further help us understand the drawings of each participant, we have compared the children's drawings to Viktor Lowenfeld's Stages of Drawing Development.

**Stages of drawing development**

We have observed that Child A's drawing is in The Gang Stage, also known as The Dawning Realism. Perspective is one of the characteristics of this stage where the use of small to large objects could be observed. Drawings in this stage are more detailed, and effects such as shading and use of color combinations are also present. Meanwhile, Child B and Child C's drawings are in the Pre-schematic Stage wherein a person is the first representational attempt.

Drawings of persons in this stage are characterized by a circle for a head and two vertical lines for legs. Certain environmental factors may have contributed as to why the participants' drawings belonged in the respective stages, such as behaviors during the intervention, time of day of the intervention, and time of preparation for the intervention.

**Simulacrum**



A series of interview questions were asked during the intervention. Through the combination of the drawings and responses of our participants, we developed The Giving Tree, a conceptual framework which illustrates three interesting themes that emerged relative to how children resolve problems in turn-taking.

The simulacrum of our research displays a mango tree with a fallen coconut on the ground. Its roots, leaves, and the fallen mango represent the said themes respectively. The growth of the mango tree starts with the roots and whatever nutrients it gets will be passed up the trunk, onto the leaves then to its fruits. The emotion could affect the reaction and permission positively or negatively.

**DISCUSSION**

According to Mildred Parten's (1932) Stages of Play, as the child grows in age they tend to participate more in games or in play that involves interaction with other children and less in unoccupied, onlooker and solitary play. As the child grows and they become more involved in interactive play with other children, turn-taking becomes a consistent part of their activities. The results of this qualitative case study have shown how children with special needs resolve problems in turn-

taking through drawing. From our findings, we were able to formulate three themes namely: Emotion, Reaction, and Permission which gives more information on how children resolve problems in turn-taking.

As reflected in the study, children are able to feel different emotions when they face challenging situations such as another child grabbing a toy they are playing with. Negative emotions specifically indicated by the respondents are anger and sadness. Children, even at a young age, have a sense of ownership, just like when they are given the toy they like. They automatically feel bad when someone grabs their toy. Studies conducted by Bretherton (1989) and Fein (1989) as cited by White (2006) propose that play gives children an opportunity to manage negative feelings and emotions in a “risk-free context by exploring and modifying their emotional experiences” (White, 2006 p. 22). Through the intervention, we could identify the emotions expressed by the child in the social stories. Once the negative emotion is identified, one may be able to regulate the emotions.

Findings from the study also revealed that children respond to various perplexing situations they experience such as when a peer borrows or grabs a toy. According to Peters et al. (2013), children about the age of five enjoy portraying different play roles with their peers and are able to negotiate conflict. Based on the responses of the participants, they would handle the situation by allowing their peers to borrow the toy with or without conditions (i.e “Yes, but they need to say ‘please’ first” and “Edi sige pero wag mo lang sisirain ha.”). In the event of another child grabbing the toy, they would resolve the situation by asking to give it back, through physical means such as chasing and catching, intimidating the peer (dropping a name of someone with authority) and just letting the toy go. According to Ramani and Brownell (2014), one way for children to attempt solving their opposing perspectives is through discussion. Also, when they engage in discussion, children increase their understanding of challenging situations. A child crying because he or she was not allowed to borrow someone else’s toy is one of the many situations that can be seen in a home or school setting with regards to turn-taking. Nonetheless, not allowing someone to borrow his or her toy is not socially acceptable. The study that we made on resolving dilemmas in turn-taking of children

can serve as a test for the parents or teachers to see if a child’s answer is socially acceptable. In cases where it is not, such as the given example, parents and teachers are given a chance to correct these responses or behaviors of children.

The permission dimension is concerned as to how children will seek approval to borrow a toy or join a game. In turn, this also denotes how children will give approval to another child joining a game. As reflected in the study conducted by Malti et al. (2016), when preschool- and elementary school-age children make decisions as to share a toy or not, a greatly influencing factor is the characteristic of the recipient. Seeking for permission allows the owner of the toy to gain authority and respect by courteously asking to borrow his or her toy. Children share their toys most especially when other children ask to borrow the toy properly and provided that the borrower will adhere to his/her terms. Our study in resolving dilemmas in turn-taking can be applied in situations of an early childhood setting such as in school or at home. Children, when asked by a peer if he or she can borrow a toy, could give a right or wrong response. A child responds correctly when he or she permits the peer to borrow the toy while a wrong response is when he or she does not share it with others. Another example of permission evident in these settings is the concept of yes or no and yes, you may or no, you may not. Situations that display dilemmas in turn-taking become a learning ground for children wherein they learn that it is not always that they are allowed for something that they want. Children also discover the concept of consequence in these turn-taking situations of borrowing and lending. Sharing a toy with someone else can lead to positive consequences such as earning a friend, getting to interact with a playmate, and playing in a peaceful environment. On the other hand, not sharing could lead to negative consequences, namely, fighting, getting scolded by a parent or a teacher, and crying.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The study has vividly described how children with special needs resolve dilemmas in turn-taking through drawing. The information gathered showed that the respondents’ way of resolving turn-taking problems could be classified into three, namely: emotion, reaction and permission. Consequently, these

dimensions reveal the depth of how these children with special needs resolve issues in turn-taking.

The results from the fable-type assessment and their responses to the interview questions yield the same thought. Studies appear to show that many, if not most individuals with ASD seem to have difficulties identifying social cues and norms (Nah, 2011) and children with externalizing disorders such as ADHD are poor informants of their own behaviour because of their difficulties with self-reflection and self-evaluation (Zucker, Morris, Ingram, Morris, & Bakeman, 2002 as cited by Nah, 2011). Interestingly, we have learned from our participants that despite their diagnoses, they have shown socially-acceptable ways of solving problems in turn-taking. One characteristic of a child with ADHD is being impulsive; however our participants' solutions regarding issues in turn-taking did not show any signs of impulsivity. Hence, we have learned that not all children diagnosed with ADHD show impulsive reactions in certain situations.

From the information gathered, we have learned that family members, especially siblings are also considered as friends and playmates of our respondents. Moreover, we have learned that drawing and coloring activities could help lessen the fidgeting of children diagnosed with ADHD. In addition, these activities also serve as a motivating factor for these children to be more engaged in the intervention we have conducted. In addition, we have learned that using their favorite toy as an element in the social stories increases the participants' focus and engagement in the activities.

Based from our experience during the intervention, we have learned that all of the participants should have been equally reminded at least three days before conducting the intervention, in order for them to be equally conditioned for the activities to be done.

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