Touching Base on Children's Interactions with Tablet Games

# Details

## Year

2017

## DOI

10.1145/3130859.3131432

## Issued

2017

## Language

English

## Start Page

## End Page

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## Type

Conference proceeding

## Journal

Extended Abstracts Publication of the Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play

## Publisher

ACM

## Topics

## Sample

20 disabled children aged from 2 to 14 years of age (cognitive ages of the children ranged from 3 months to 10 years) living in the North West of England. Roughly one-third of the children had both cognitive and motor disabilities, a third had learning difficulties and a third had motor or sensory difficulties.

## Implications For Parents About

Parental practices / parental mediation

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Industry

# Abstract

This paper describes work commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to investigate how children with multiple disabilities use tablet games in their homes. An extended study of 20 children in their families, using surveys, diaries, interviews and observations, is described. The findings from the study are captured in themes which bring together the game play difficulties. A set of six personas are included that describe some of the difficulties faced by some of the children. Five key challenges for designers of games for children with disabilities are presented. The paper includes reflections from the BBC, on how this work has found its way into their product lines and the benefits of working in an academic – industrial partnership are highlighted.

# Outcome

"For the children with the disabilities the extent to which games were played depended on the child’s cognitive and physical abilities. Parents saw games fulfilling different needs – many used games as a ‘respite’ from otherwise very demanding children, this was a thin end of a wedge that could be referred to as games for entertainment. Most of the parents wanted games that would be ‘good for their children’ in terms of either learning or therapy. Therapy was seen in many cases as an adjunct to learning. Collaborative play was flagged up as problematic given the form factor of tablets." (Read et al., 2017: 5). "Around 25% of the children we met were incapable of
playing alone. Of those who could play alone, around
50% needed reasonably close supervision. Instructions
for gameplay were almost always ignored by children
and we observed many children simply clicking / tapping
all over screens until something happened... Participants often learned the
conventions of a game (e.g. Endless Runner) and then
wanted similar games where they could use this existing
skill, rather than having to n learn new interaction or
gameplay models... Access to games was typically problematic as searching
or typing URLs required literacy and input skills – most of
the children we met didn’t have these skills. In some
cases, voice search/Siri was used to enable children to
find content." (Read et al., 2017: 6). "Longevity and progression were both problems. Some of the children played simple games over and over and over and parents weren’t all keen on this – others ‘wanted’ games to be so simple as to ‘amuse’ their children for a length of time seeing games as a ‘babysitter’ in stressful times. Well-designed games typically force progression through levels and include increasing challenge, many participants found this was not what they wanted and various mechanisms were devised to allow children to repeatedly play at the same level... Purchasing of apps was mentioned as problematic – most of the parents we met appeared to be on limited incomes and they didn’t want their children inadvertently purchasing things that then were only played for minutes. Some parents also worried about their children playing games online because they perceived the internet to be a dangerous place." (Read et al., 2017: 7).