



## Receptive Language Disorder in “A Boy Called PO 2016” Movie

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### Abstract\*

*This study used psycholinguistics approach to discover the symptoms of receptive language disorder in A boy Called Po movie. This study was conducted using qualitative methods. In the process of collecting data, researchers used observational methods and non-participatory techniques proposed by (Sudaryanto, 2015). Data collection was obtained from watching A Boy Called Po movie. Then, the data were analyzed and classified based on symptoms of receptive language disorder according to the theory of (Carroll, 1985 as cited in (Faida, 2020). The result of this study was that the main character of A Boy Called Po movie had a receptive language disorder. Some of the factors that caused receptive language disorder were the main character was not interested in communicating, the main character only focused on what was on his mind without paying attention to his surroundings, and the main character only thought about himself without looking at the condition of others. There were 15 data of receptive language disorder found in the movie. The 15 data consisted of 8 data on not appearing to listen, 4 data on difficulty following verbal communication, 2 data on difficulty in interpreting words or phrases, and 1 data on difficulty understanding complex sentences.*

## 1. Introduction

Language could not be separated from human life because it is a medium used by humans to communicate with each other. With language humans could convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Even so, not everyone has the ability to understand language and also produce language. The inability to understand language and produce language is known as language disorder. One of the related phenomena was seen in the Special Books by Special Kids YouTube channel on June 20, 2018.

Chris: “Abigail do you love your mom?”

**Abigail played with blankets.**

Abigail’s mom: “Hey, Ab. Can you answer Chris’s question?”

**Abigail was mumbling and playing with her blankets.**

Abigail’s mom: “She loves blankets on her head.”

This quote conversation existed in the Special Books by Special Kids YouTube channel on June 20, 2018 at the minute of 00:01:28. It could be seen that Abigail had an inability to respond to speech. This could be seen when Chris asked, "Do you love your mom?" and Abigail didn't listen to Chris, that's why Abigail's mother asked in turn. Even though her mother asked, Abigail still didn't answer. Instead, she kept mumbling and playing with her blankets. There was no answer from Abigail because she was an autistic

person. This condition caused Abigail to be unable to produce language, understand language, and also had difficulty interacting.

The brain has a very important role in producing and understanding language, that is why humans need to know how brain damage affects language comprehension as well as language production. Psycholinguistics is the study of psychological and neurological processes that influence human language production. Carroll (2004) stated that psycholinguistics was primarily a linguistic and psychological integration. On the other hand, Hartley (as cited in Suherman, 2015) stated that psycholinguistics is the study of how language and mind interact in language acquisition, processing, and production. With psycholinguistics, humans could understand that when someone has a normal brain, then that person could produce language well, and also gives a clear response according to what is said. However, when a person is unable to respond according to what is being said, continues to mumble, and has difficulty producing language while communicating, the person has a language disorder.

Language disorder is a person's inability to understand language and also produce language. Lanier (2010) defined language disorder as a person's inability to interpret, form, or use words correctly. On the other hand, language disorder according to (Dulm, 2002) as affect linguistic processing, including grammar (syntax and morphology), semantics (meaning), and other components of language. Field (2003) stated that language disorder divided into two, namely expressive and receptive language disorders. Producing language is difficult for those with expressive language disorder. Meanwhile, people with receptive language disorder have trouble interpreting language.

The phenomenon of language disorder could often be found in life. One of the health conditions in which language disorders could be found is autism. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a condition in which a person's brain nerves have problems, so that the person has difficulty producing and understanding language. According to Simmons (2006), autism spectrum disorder is a neurologic illness characterized by a substantial impairment in a person's capacity to communicate and interact with others, causing them to react differently to their environment. In other words, apart from having a lack of verbal response and lack of understanding language when communicating, people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) also have poor social interaction.

Language disorders and autism spectrum disorders are not only found in society, but could also be found in literary works, such as: movies, dramas, novels, poetry, etc. In this case, the researcher analyzed a movie entitled A Boy Called Po. One of the phenomena of language disorder from A Boy Called Po could be seen below:

Mr. Wilson : "Listen to Po."

Po was reading the newspaper

Mr. Wilson : "Po, I can't stay up all night. You have to go to bed."

**Po : "Wall street journal. Record on December 29, you see there."**

This quoted conversation existed in A Boy Called Po movie at the minute of 00:05:15. It could be seen that Po had difficulty interpreting words or phrases. Po also could not interpret the condition of the people around him. Mr. Wilson had said if he couldn't stay up all night, he needed sleep. However, Po did not understand what his father was saying, nor could he understand his father's condition, and chose to continue reading the newspaper. Based on the theory of Field and Carroll (as cited in Faida, 2020), the difficulty interpreting words or phrases experienced by Po is included in the symptoms of receptive language disorders.

Research on language disorders is needed so that humans could find out the types and symptoms of language disorders experienced by people with autism. In addition, humans could know how to build communication with people with autism because, in

communicating, the speakers must have a purpose or exchange of information needed. However, in the *A Boy Called Po* movie, the main character had difficulties understanding language and responding to utterances. The responses of the main character were unclear because he had autism and language disorder. Thus, this research found out the symptoms of receptive language disorder in *A Boy Called Po* movie based on Field and Carroll's theory.

Research on language disorders has been carried out in various countries. Previous research is useful to provide an overview of the topic to be studied. There are two previous studies related to this research. The first research came from (Faida, 2020) in her thesis entitled *Psycholinguistic Analysis on Language Disorders of Autistic Characters in the Miracle in Cell Film NO.7*. She used Carroll's (1985) theory of language disorders. According to the findings of this study, the sufferer in this movie had expressive language disorder, which expressed as trouble finding vocabulary (repeating words and imitating). Then there's receptive language disorder, which expressed it as difficulties following verbal instructions, a lack of hearing abilities, difficulty understanding complex sentences, and trouble interpreting words or phrases.

Another researcher came from (Levia, Jufrizal, & Marlina, 2019) in their research entitled *The study of language disorder of an autistic savant in Levinson's film Rain Man (1988)*. The focus of this research was to identify the different types of language disorders in Levinson's *Rain Man* film. According to the findings, the most common type of language disorder encountered by autistic savants in Levinson's *Rain Man* film was expressive language disorder, which accounted for 67.7% of the total. Meanwhile, for receptive language accounted for 32.3% of the total. In this paper, the researcher conducted research with the same topic, but differs in the object of research. The researchers took data from the film *A Boy Called Po* and analysed all the responses of the main characters related to receptive language disorder based on Field and Carroll's theory.

### 1.1 Not appearing to listen

A person with a receptive language disorder is often not interested in listening to what other people have to say. In addition, people with receptive language disorder have difficulty understanding what other people are saying. As a result, they find it difficult to provide feedback during conversations. An example of an autistic person who did not appear to be listening could be seen in *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie which was studied by (Faida, 2020). In datum 15 (Faida, 2020), Ji young said, **“Stop playing!”** and Yong Goo replied, **“Sailor Moon bag! Pretty Sailor Moon bag. It’s cold.”** According to Faida (2020) Yong Goo did not listen to his interlocutor who asked him to stop playing. People with autism spectrum disorder faced this problem because they were uninterested in what other people had to say. In addition, people with autism spectrum disorder also lack of auditory, so that caused them not to respond when communicating.

### 1.2 Difficulty following verbal communication

Language receptive disorder affects people's ability to understand and follow spoken instructions. They have auditory processing problems, which means their brains could not process sounds or spoken words. An example of an autistic person who had difficulty following verbal communication could be seen in *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie which was studied by (Faida, 2020). In datum 20 (Faida, 2020), Su Yang Ho said, **“Quiet!”** But Yong Goo replied, **“Thank you.”** According to Faida (2020) Yong Goo struggled to understand what was being spoken to him because people with receptive language disorder had trouble understanding what others were saying. That was why Yong Goo preferred to refuse verbal instructions from his interlocutor, and said something irrelevant to what was being said.

### 1.3 Difficulty understanding complex sentence

Complex sentences are difficult to understand for those with receptive language disorders. Furthermore, a typical error is difficulty understanding complex sentences, where a person could not absorb the long sentences he or she receives, and the grammar in those sentences is also difficult to understand. An example of an autistic person who had difficulty understanding complex sentence could be seen in *My Name is Khan* movie which was studied by (Suherman, 2015). In datum 20 (Suherman, 2015), Zakir said, **“You can't marry her, haram! And if you will do something like that then we won't have any relationship and there is no place for you in my house. She is Hindu.”** Khan confused, **“Hindu?”** Then Zakir said, **“And we have differences.”** And Khan finally replied, **“No...No difference. Good people, bad people, and there is no other difference.”** According to Suherman (2015), Zakir explained that Khan was unable to marry Mandira. However, Khan got confused and in his perspective the difference was a good thing. Khan thought that good people and bad people were equal in every way. Khan struggled to comprehend complex sentences and to express himself using complex sentences. He utilized simpler phrases than children and had trouble connecting disparate and complex ideas with conjunctive linkages.

### 1.4 Difficulty interpreting words or phrases

One of the symptoms of receptive language disorder is having difficulty interpreting or analysing words or phrases that contain literal, non-literal, figurative meaning, or connotative meanings. Furthermore, people with receptive language disorder have difficulty analysing the use of certain words to form meaning or tone. An example of an autistic person who had difficulty interpreting words or phrases could be seen in *Miracle in Cell No. 7* movie which was studied by (Faida, 2020). In datum 23 (Faida, 2020), Yesung said, **“Why're you here? You're not bad man. This is a school, not bad place. Drink this.”** Then Yong Goo replied, **“Not school. It's prison. All bad people.”** According to Faida (2020) Yong Goo had problems in interpreting words and phrases. It could be seen from how Yong Goo's reaction to his interlocutor. Yong Goo was unable to understand figurative language. As a result, he was unable to understand what the interlocutor had uttered.

## 2. Research Methods

This study was a qualitative descriptive research proposed by (Abbot, 2013). In the process of collecting data, researchers used observational methods and non-participatory techniques proposed by (Sudaryanto, 2015). It means, the researchers observed the data through watching *A Boy Called Po* movie. Then, the researchers did not act as participants or actors in this movie. There were several steps taken by the researchers in collecting data. First, the researchers watched the *A Boy Called Po* movie. Second, the researchers noted the responses in the movie based on the theory in question. Finally, the researchers identified these responses based on receptive language disorder by Field and Carroll's theory (as cited in Faida, 2020). In analysing the data, the researchers used psycholinguistics approach to see how the main character could understand language and produce language by looking at linguistic and psychological factors. Lastly, this study was conducted by describing the data using words and sentences.

### 3. Discussions

#### 3.1 Finding

There were 15 data found on *A Boy Called Po* movie showed receptive language disorder. The results of this research could be seen in the following table.

Table 1.

#### Receptive language disorder found in *A Boy Called Po* 2016 movie

No	Types	Frequency
1	Not appearing to listen	8
2	Difficulty following verbal communication	4
3	Difficulty understanding complex sentences	1
4	Difficulty interpreting words or phrases	2
<b>Total</b>		15

Based on the table above, the 15 data were split into eight data of not appearing to listen, four data of difficulty following verbal communication, two data of difficulty interpreting words or phrases, and one data of difficulty understanding complex sentences.

#### 3.2 Discussion

Receptive language disorder is a condition when a person has difficulty understanding language. A person suffering from receptive language disorder has several symptoms, including: not appearing to listen, difficulty following verbal communication, difficulty understanding complex sentence, and difficulty interpreting words or phrases. There were 15 data analyzed by researchers.

##### Data 1

Mr. Wilson : "Okay, Po, new rule. No food on the walls, okay? No food on the walls. Alright, come on. Let's go get some sponges and clean this up."

Po : "It's your rainbow. Your rainbow, daddy." (00:06:45)

##### (Po took a bottle of sauce on the table)

Mr. Wilson: "Hey, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Come with me, come on."

Data 1 showed that Po had difficulty following verbal communication. This could be seen from Po's response when his father said, "No food on the walls." Instead of following his father's words, Po grabbed a bottle of sauce and wanted to go back to draw rainbows on the wall. This happened because Po was an autistic child. People with autism have difficulty understanding language and people with autism often think only of themselves. That was why Po struggled to follow verbal instructions.

##### Data 2

Po : "Mac and cheese, please."

Mr. Wilson : "No, we don't have Mac and cheese today, buddy."

Po : "Calcium's good for your bones."

Mr. Wilson : "Yeah, well, this is peanut butter and jelly which is known for it's simplicity and budgetary properties."

Po : "Mac and cheese, please." (00:07:19)

Data 2 showed that Po had difficulty in understanding complex sentence. This could be seen from Po's response when his father tried to explain why Po had to eat peanut butter and jelly. However, Po still asked about the Mac and cheese. This happened because Po could not understand the complex sentences spoken by his father, besides that Po also could not understand the conditions around him.

### Data 3

Mr. Wilson : "No, Po, you have to eat your sandwich. No, I am not doing this today."

**Po : "Patrick's a nice name for a boy, but I think I'll call you Po."**

Mr. Wilson : "You need to eat your sandwich."

**Po : "Where's mommy?" (00:07:36)**

Data 3 showed that Po had difficulty following verbal communication. This could be seen from Po's response when his father asked him to eat his sandwich. Instead of following his father's words, Po said something irrelevant which was, "Patrick's a nice name for a boy, but I think I'll call you Po." Po was a child with autism. Autistic people often only think about themselves. Po did not want to eat a sandwich, because he asked for Mac and cheese. That was why Po could not follow his father's verbal communication and chose to say something irrelevant.

### Data 4

Po : "Don't be afraid, daddy."

Mr. Wilson : "**Afraid of what, Po?**"

**(Po did not listen, he was eating his sandwich.)**

Po : "**Yuck! Yuck. Mac and cheese, please.**" (00:07:55)

Data 4 showed that Po did not listen to what his father asked. This happened because Po was an autistic person. People with autism found it difficult to be interested in communicating. Therefore, Po's attention was on the sandwich, and he did not had any interest in what his father had to say. That was why he did not answer his daddy's question.

### Data 5

Teacher : "Patrick."

Teacher : "Po."

**(Po did not listen, he was busy writing in his notebook.)**

Teacher : "Po? Can you tell us what the capital city of Mississippi is?"

Taylor : "Hey, spaceman, the teacher asked you a question."

Teacher : "Taylor, stop it. You know the answer, don't you, Patrick?"

Po : "M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i." (00:08:21)

Data 5 showed that Po did not listen to what his teacher asked. This happened because Po was an autistic person. People with autism found it difficult to be interested in communicating. Therefore, Po only focused on his book. He was not at all interested in his teacher's words. That was why when Po answered, his answer was not what his teacher expected.

### Data 6

Mr. Wilson: "Hey, Po."

Mr. Wilson: "How you doing, buddy? How's that knee?"

(Fax machine sound)

**Po : "Bat transmission received."**

Cathy : "Patrick, I've told you not to play with that. He's obsessed with it." (00:14:11)

Data 6 showed that Po did not listen to what his teacher asked. This happened because Po was an autistic person. People with autism found it difficult to be interested in communicating and would only respond when something caught their attention, as seen in the conversation above. That was why Po only gave a response when he heard the sound of the fax machine.

#### Data 7

Mr. Wilson: "Listen to me, it is not okay for other kids to pick on you at school. So daddy's gonna teach you."

**(Po did not listen, he averted his eyes from his father.)**

Mr. Wilson: "Hey, Po, Po, hey buddy, with me. Daddy's gonna teach you how to stand up for yourself, you understand?"

Po : "Stand up." (00:16:55)

Data 7 showed that Po did not listen to what his father said. This could be seen from the sentence uttered by Mr. Wilson, "Hey, Po, Po, hey buddy, with me." This happened because the attention of a person with autism could be quickly distracted. Po did not listen to what his father said because his attention was quickly distracted. That was why Mr. Wilson immediately tried to get Po's attention back.

#### Data 8

Mr. Wilson : "Po, dinnertime."

**(Po did not listen, he was playing with his blankets and Po had his own imaginary world)**

Po : "I have to go. See ya later." (In his imaginary world)

Jack : "Bring me back some of them noodles with the golden sauce." (The guy in Po's imaginary world).

**Mr. Wilson : "Po, Po, dinnertime." (00:20:11)**

Data 8 showed that Po did not listen to what his father said. Po was an autistic person, and someone with autism had a world of their own. This made it difficult for Po to interact because he was too focused on his own imaginary world. That was why Po did not listen to his father's words.

#### Data 9

(Po wanted to touch the spinning propeller of the toy plane).

Mr. Wilson : "Po!"

**Mr. Wilson : "Po! Freeze, freeze!"**

**(Po touched the spinning propeller of the toy plane). (00:29:48)**

Data 9 showed that Po did not listen to what his father's scream, as a result his finger was injured by the plane's propeller. This happened because people with autism were completely unaware of what was around them when they focused on something that interests them. That was why Po did not listen his father's screams, because his focus was on the plane's rotating propeller.

#### Data 10

Mr. Wilson: "Hey, Po, I'll be right back. Stay here, okay?"

Mr. Wilson: "Stay right here."

**Po : "Big ouchie." (00:30:23)**

Data 10 showed that Po did not listen to his father's utterances. This happened because Po was not interested in what his father had to say. Po was an autistic person. People with autism found it difficult to be interested in communicating. On top of that, Po's focus was only on his injured finger, that was why Instead of answering his father's question, he said, "Big ouchie."

**Data 11**

Bill : "Patrick."

**(There was a blanket covering Po's head).**

Bill : "Patrick."

Mr. Wilson : "Po."

Po : "Patrick's a nice name for a boy, but I think I'll call you Po."

Bill : "Well, hey, Po. My name's bill."

Po : "Okay, bill." (00:38:14)

Data 11 showed that Po did not listen to what Bill said. There were two factors that kept Po from answering Bill. First, Po had his own imaginary world, so he did not listen to what Bill had to say. Second, Bill called Po by his real name, Patrick. It could be seen that Po only responded when his father called him, "Po." So, it could be concluded that Po would only respond when people called him Po instead of Patrick.

**Data 12**

Mr. Wilson : "Po, daddy really needs some quiet time right now, okay?"

**Po : "Amelia Carr has a beautiful voice."**

Mr. Wilson : "Po, daddy is very happy that you have a friend at school."

Po : "She has two daddies."

Mr. Wilson : "I know, but, if you're going to stay in here right now, I need you to be quiet."

**Po : "Don't be afraid, daddy."**

Mr. Wilson : "Be afraid of what, Po?"

Po : "Where's mommy?"

Mr. Wilson : "Po, I need quiet, right now. Please."

Po : "Oh, okay, daddy."

(Fax machine sound.)

**Po : "Fax machine, daddy!"** (00:43:40)

Data 12 showed that Po had difficulty following verbal communication. It could be seen from Po's responses when his father asked him to be quiet. Instead of being silent or obeying his father's orders, Po continued to say something. This happened because people with autism often only think about themselves, they also often ignore the people around them. Po had difficulty following his father's orders because he only thought about himself, and he also did not understand how his father condition. That was why Po continued to say something.

**Data 13**

Po : "**Toy store.**"

Mr. Wilson : "No, the toy store's not there anymore, Po, you know that."

Po : "**Let's go to the toy store.**"

Mr. Wilson : "No, it's not there anymore."

Data 13 showed that Po had difficulty interpreting words or phrases. It could be seen from Po's responses when his father tried to explain the toy store was not there anymore. Po could not interpret what his father said, because all he could remember was that the toy store was still there.

**Data 14**

Po : "**Where's mommy?**"

Mr. Wilson : "**Stop it, will you stop it please?**"

Po took a shoe on display in front of the shop

Mr. Wilson : "No, no, hey, you can't take a shoe. No, you can't touch that."

Po : "**Where's mommy?**"



Data 14 showed that Po had difficulty interpreting words or phrases. It could be seen from Po's responses when his father said, "Stop it, will you stop it please?" Po could not understand what his father meant, because he only thought about himself, and did not care about his father's condition. Po could not interpret his father's words which implied discomfort with the question about his mother. That was why Po kept asking where his mother was.

#### Data 15

Po : "Where's mommy?"  
 Mr. Wilson : "Stop it."  
 Mr. Wilson : "No, hey, give me."  
 Po : "**Where's mommy?**"  
 Mr. Wilson : "Po, stop!"  
 Po : "**Where's mommy?**"  
 Mr. Wilson : "Stop it!"

Data 15 showed that Po had difficulty following verbal communication. It could be seen from Po's responses when his father asked him to stop asking about his mom. Instead of being silent or obeying his father's orders, Po continued to ask his mother. This happened because Po only thought about himself, and did not understand his father's feelings. His father did not like it when Po asked where his mother was, but Po had difficulty understanding his father's feelings. That was why Po kept asking where his mother was.

#### 4. Conclusion



This study identified the symptoms of receptive language disorder using Carroll's (1985) theory. Researchers found that the main character from the movie *A Boy Called Po* showed all the symptoms of receptive language disorder. There were 15 data found, the data consisted of 8 data for appearing to listen, 4 data for difficulty following verbal communication, 2 data for difficulty interpreting words or phrases, and last one data for difficulty understanding complex sentences. From the 15 data found, it could be concluded that the main character of the film *A boy Called Po* suffered from receptive language disorders. In other words, the main character had difficulties in understanding the language. There were several factors that affect the main character's difficulty in understanding language. First, people with autism were not interested in communicating. Second, people with autism only focused on what's on their minds. Third, people with autism only thought about themselves. Finally, people with autism found it difficult to understand the situation around them. This study was important because readers could find out what the symptoms were experienced when someone suffered from receptive language disorder. In addition, this research could also be expected to help readers in communicating with people with autism.

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