

Assessment of the Illustrated Language Activities of the Portage Guide to Early Education

Ofelia A. Damag

Abstract—The study was focused on the development and assessment of the illustrated language activities of the 1996 Edition of the Portage Guide to Early Education. It determined the extent of appropriateness, applicability, time efficiency and aesthetics of the illustrated language activities to be used as instructional material not only by teachers, but parents and caregivers as well. The eclectic research design was applied in this study using qualitative and quantitative methods. To determine the applicability and time efficiency of the study, a try out was done. Since the eclectic research design was used, it made use of a researcher-made survey questionnaire and focus group discussion. Analysis of the data was done through weighted mean and ANOVA. The respondents of the study were representatives of Special Education (SPED) teachers, caregivers and parents of a special-needs child, particularly with difficulties in learning basic language skills. The results of the study show that a large number of respondents are SPED teachers and caregivers and are mostly college graduates. Many of them have earned units towards Master's studies. Moreover, a majority of the respondents have not attended seminars or in-service training in early intervention for them to be more competent in the area of specialization. It is concluded that the illustrated language activities under review in this study are appropriate, applicable, time efficient and aesthetic for use as a tool in teaching. The recommendations are focused on the advocacy for SPED teachers, caregivers and parents of special-needs children to be more consistent in the implementation of the new instructional materials as an aid in an intervention program.

Keywords—Illustrated language activities, inclusion, portage guide to early education, special educational needs.

I. INTRODUCTION

LANGUAGE is called the symbolization of thought. It is a learned code or system that enables individuals to communicate ideas and express wants and needs [4]. The acquisition of language is partly innate and partly learned, as children interact with other people and the environment. Language skills are so important to children, as without it, they cannot let others know what they want and need, and what is important to them. There is more and more evidence suggesting that having a good command of language goes hand-in-hand with the ability to imagine and think of new ideas [3]. By using language, adults help children learn a sense of mutual trust and the importance of taking conversational turns. Children also learn that paying attention to the other person enables them to respond to what has been said [1]. The first step for parents and families of a young child with a

disability is to prepare for the assessment process in which their child's strengths, support, and education/intervention needs will be determined. One program that is very familiar is the Portage Guide to Early Education (PGEE), which originated in Wisconsin, USA in 1969. It is designed to address the individual stage of each child [5]. Teaching methods are based on the principles of applied behavior analysis. Purpose of teaching and its results are recorded precisely [2]. This study aims to assess the 99 descriptive items of the Language Domain of the 1996 Edition of the PGEE. The suggested activities of language activities were put into drawing and assessed by the respondents. The specific objectives of the study are: (a) To illustrate the suggested 99 language activities of the card file listing to be able to teach the respondents and add knowledge on how to make special children in learning the basic language skills; (b) To provide support and updated information on how to assess a child's disability particularly the language skills; (c) To assist service providers to be more effective in incorporating intervention strategies among children with language disabilities; (d) To provide services in rural communities by the respondents for easily translated instructions among children with language difficulties.

A. Review of Related Literature

The Portage Guide to Early Intervention consists of three parts: a checklist where to record the child's developmental progress, a set of activity card file for the listing of possible methods of teaching which correspond to the behavioral objectives, and the manual of instructions. The checklist presents skills from birth to six years in the areas of infant stimulation, socialization, self-help, language, motor and cognition. Each section is color-coded and lists skills based on normal development. The card file provides a sequential list of behaviors to be taught and suggests methods on how to teach the skill. From these, the early interventionist chooses the one that he thinks would be most effective in teaching the child. The manual includes specific directions for completing the checklist and use of the card file. Directions have been included for breaking the behavior into a series of teaching steps into the teaching process known as Task Analysis. The PGEE requires the completion of the checklist for each entrant to the program [2].

B. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The study covers the social learning theory of Bandura which includes the four conditions or features of effective learning, namely: attention, retention of details, motor reproduction, and motivation. These conditions are

emphasized in the illustrated method of teaching language specifically in the receptive skills which would disclose how a person understands through reading and listening and in the expressive skills which would manifest how a person uses language through speaking and writing. Parents, caregivers and SPED teachers who are the respondents of the study would then assess if the use of the illustrated PGEE would lead to the improvement of the language ability of children with special needs. It would evaluate if such endeavor would show that the expected enhancement is evident. This would then be a proof in concluding that the said PGEE would be more effective when illustrated as shown in Fig. 1 [6].

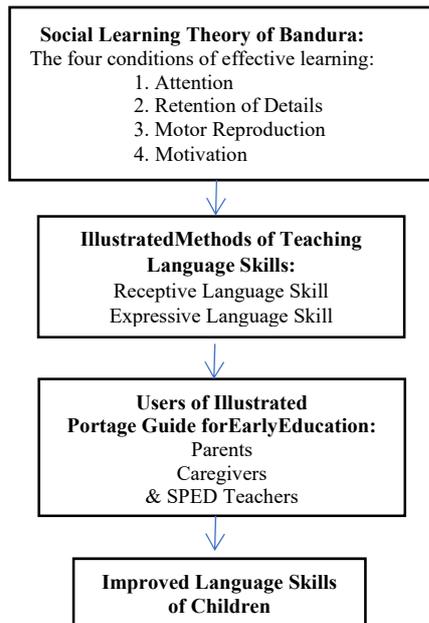


Fig. 1 Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

II. METHODS

A. Participants, Materials and Procedure of the Study

Respondents of the study consisted of selected non-professional parents, professional parents, caregivers, and SPED teachers.

The study used the illustrated language activities and researcher-made questionnaire as the research instrument. It also used focus group discussion and individual interviews to gather data through the use of survey questionnaire as the means of assessing factors such as the appropriateness of the illustrations, applicability, time efficiency and aesthetics. The study sought to answer the following questions: 1. What is the socio-demographic profile of the SPED teachers, parents of children with special needs and caregivers in terms of level of educational attainment, profession, and participation in SPED seminars and training? 2. What is the extent of the appropriateness, applicability, time efficiency and aesthetics of the illustrated language activities? 3. Is there a significant difference in the rating of the respondents when grouped according to level of educational attainment, occupation and participation in SPED seminars and training as to the extent of appropriateness, applicability, time efficiency, and aesthetics?

Responses to Question 1 were tabulated and analyzed using the frequency and percentage, while for Question 2, the weighted mean was calculated based on the five-point Likert-type scale. At the same time, with regard to Question 3, ANOVA was used to establish the significant difference in the extent of appropriateness, applicability, time efficiency and aesthetics of the illustrated language activities in relation to the respondents' educational attainment, profession, and participation in SPED training and seminars.

III. RESULTS

The following are the results of the study:

Socio-demographic profile of respondents. The educational attainment of the respondents appears that most are college graduate and college level. There are also least respondents that are elementary/high school graduate/level. Those in college graduate/level got the most number of respondents in terms of education and the least were elementary graduate/level, while majority of the respondents are caregivers and SPED teachers. Few are nonprofessional parents of the total population as shown in Table I.

Early intervention seminars/training sessions attended by respondents. As shown in Table I, most of the respondents have not attended seminars/training sessions, 14 have undergone only a single seminar/training, while very few attended two and three or more seminars/training sessions, respectively.

TABLE I
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION IN SPED TRAINING AND SEMINARS

| Education | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|------------|
| MA Graduate/MA Unit Earners | 22 | 29 |
| University Graduate/College Level | 40 | 53 |
| Elementary Graduate /High School Graduate | 14 | 18 |
| TOTAL | 76 | 100 |
| Profession | | |
| Non-Professional Parent | 14 | 18 |
| Professional Parent | 16 | 21 |
| Caregiver | 23 | 30 |
| SPED Teachers | 23 | 30 |
| TOTAL | 76 | 100 |
| Seminars/Trainings | | |
| No seminars/training sessions | 52 | 68 |
| One seminar/training session | 14 | 18 |
| Two seminars/training sessions | 5 | 7 |
| Three or more seminars/training sessions | 5 | 7 |
| TOTAL | 76 | 100 |

IV. DISCUSSION

On the extent of applicability and time efficiency of the drawn pictures from the card file listing of the PGEE are rated very good; since it is the highest descriptive rating, it indicates that the item being rated was well suited to its purpose of portraying the message as depicted in the PGEE card. Since the illustration is graded from simple to a more complicated one, this means that they can be used or applied to teaching both a normal and special needs child. It means also that the

illustration can be easily adapted, imitated and understood. In regard to the extent of appropriateness and aesthetics of the illustration of the language activities, the respondents rated the items as good. This means that the item being rated by the respondents has suited in acceptable level on its purpose in portraying the message as depicted in the PGEE card, as shown in Table II. On the other hand, in the significant difference in the extent of appropriateness, applicability, time efficiency and aesthetic of the illustrated language activities in relation to the level of education of the respondents shows that the respondents in elementary level gave higher ratings on the illustrated activities. As comments gathered by the researcher, the respondents find the illustrated activities easier to understand and utilize than a written text, as shown in Table III.

The ANOVA on the differences of the respondents answer according to their level of education is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. It means that there is no significant difference in the extent of appropriateness, applicability, and time efficiency with regards to their level of education. While,

in terms of aesthetics of the illustration is less than the 0.05 level of significance, hence, there is significant difference in the respondents assessment in regard to the beauty of the drawings.

Based on the findings derived from this study, the following conclusions are deduced: 1. The respondents involved in the study were chosen in order to have a fair representation of the different users such as the non-professional parents, professionals, caregivers and SPED teachers. The assessment made by them can be considered valid since they are the expected end-users of these materials. Their comments and suggestions subsequently led to the improvement of the illustrations; 2. The respondents level of education, profession and frequency in attending seminars and workshops in early intervention did not significantly differentiate their assessment on the illustrated language activities; thus, regardless of their educational level or the number of training on early intervention they attended or not, their assessment regarding the extent of the appropriateness, applicability, time efficiency and aesthetics did not really vary.

TABLE II
 RESPONDENTS' RATING ON THE EXTENT OF APPROPRIATENESS, APPLICABILITY, TIME EFFICIENCY AND AESTHETICS OF THE ILLUSTRATED LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

| Indicators | Weighted Mean | Descriptive Equivalent | Interpretation |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------------|--|
| 1. Appropriateness | 3.4759 | Good | The item being rated is acceptably suit for its purpose. |
| 2. Applicability | 3.5003 | Very Good | The item being rated is suited well on its purpose. |
| 3. Time Efficiency | 3.5263 | Very Good | The item being rated is suited well on its purpose. |
| 4. Aesthetics | 3.4141 | Good | The item being rated is acceptably suit for its purpose. |
| Overall Rating | 3.4800 | Good | The item being rated is acceptably suit for its purpose. |

TABLE III
 DIFFERENCES OF THE RESPONDENTS ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION, PROFESSION, AND SEMINARS/TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

| Overall Rating of the Respondents | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Level of Education | Between Groups | 0.401 | 2 | 0.201 | 2.168 | 0.122 | not significant |
| | Within Groups | 6.753 | 73 | 0.093 | | | |
| | Total | 7.154 | 75 | | | | |
| Profession | Between Groups | 1.330 | 3 | 0.443 | 5.478 | 0.002 | significant |
| | Within Groups | 5.825 | 72 | 0.081 | | | |
| | Total | 7.154 | 75 | | | | |
| Seminars/Trainings Attended | Between Groups | 0.161 | 3 | 0.054 | 0.552 | 0.649 | not significant |
| | Within Groups | 6.994 | 72 | 0.097 | | | |

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are presented: 1. Special education teachers could have better techniques based on the applied principles of PGEE in providing appropriate interventions for exceptional children, since they are one of the highest number of the respondents. Moreover, the respondents can also be updated with different intervention programs in assessing children with disabilities in order to prevent from possible complications. Furthermore, respondents can have more chances to enhance their knowledge and likewise help their students learn with ease especially those with language difficulties; 2. Parents are

considered as experts regarding their children's behavior and level of skill development. They are among the decision makers, and the use of illustrated activities will be of big help in determining the developmental delays in the early stage of the child. The conceptualized system of this program in drawing pictures of language activities may help enable non-professionals who have difficulties in understanding written information.

APPENDIX

A. Proposed and Final Illustration

Language 45

Ages 2-3

Uses regular plural forms (book/books)

Activity Suggestions:



Fig. 2 The proposed and final illustration of written card file checklist number 45 of the language activities, the researcher draws the written text with three choices and asks the respondents if they understand clearly the given pictures; they responded that it is clear and show no revisions since they clearly understood the drawing pictures

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