

PREVIEW

THE FOX BASIC LANGUAGE HOME PROGRAM: A PILOT STUDY

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To parents, teachers and speech pathologists
who have struggled in vain to find
effective methods to enhance
language development

THE FOX BASIC LANGUAGE HOME PROGRAM: A PILOT STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

Increasing caseloads necessitate the need for viable alternatives to intensive in-clinic language therapy. This study's purpose was to present a programmed language text which could be used by parents and to evaluate the effectiveness of using parents to aid their children's language development. Five subjects of varying ages with different complicating problems, all diagnosed as language-delayed, served as their own controls in a time series design study to determine whether parental participation had an effect upon language improvement. The study was also designed to determine whether or not this improvement, if any, was greater than that which occurred in a therapy situation that did not include parental intervention. The results lent support to the contention that parents could be effective adjuncts to therapy. Parental attitudes toward the program, future research needs and clinical implications are also discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Parental participation in fostering the intellectual processes of their children has for many years been recognized as an important factor in facilitating educational achievement. Jean Piaget's studies evoked concern when he reported that children's intellectual development is determined before the age of five (Resnik, 1970). As a result, more people have become aware of the importance of early parental home stimulation. This early involvement is especially important in developing speech and language skills in young hearing-impaired children (Pollack, 1967; Magner, 1960; Löwe, 1964; Huizing, 1965). In fact, handicapped children in general require extensive parental interaction and guidance. Public Law 94-142 recently stated that every handicapped child must be given the opportunity for education. A provision in the law required an Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.) for every handicapped child (Dubow, 1977). The law further necessitated crucial parental involvement in the development of the I.E.P.s. McAleer (1978 p.103) stated this clearly:

Recent legislation to benefit handicapped children not only encourages participation of parents in the child's educational program; it requires it. Among the provisions of Public Law 94-142 is the stipulation that an I.E.P. shall have been prepared for every handicapped child in a joint conference involving at the very least, a teacher, an administrator, and a parent.

Therefore, the importance of parental involvement has been

recognized fully.

Difficulties have arisen upon implementation of the law. The parental role can be superficial if contact is reduced to a minimum. In contrast, the parents' role may be instrumental if they are involved in planning, implementing, and supporting that which needs to be taught. Parents can also become involved in the actual teaching of their children. However, this necessitates the training and supervision of the parents in order to ensure the use of correct teaching procedures.

The effectiveness of the use of parents as teachers has been widely researched. Sommers (1962) and Sommers et al. (1964) studied the use of trained mothers as assistants in the remediation of their school-aged children with functional articulation disorders and found them to be effective teachers. Likewise, another study (Tufts and Holliday, 1959) found that the participation of mothers of children with moderate to severe functional articulation problems resulted in significant reductions of misarticulations. MacDonald (1976) reported a study in which parents were trained to teach their language-delayed children through imitation and conversation at home. The parents reported significant improvement in the forms of longer sentence length, more complex sentences and better communication skills. An analysis of the Portage Project, a home demonstration program specifically designed for handicapped children, showed that the children had significant improvements in language, I.Q., mental age, and socialization skills (Shearer and Shearer, 1972;

1976). A home stimulation program that used volunteers to teach mothers, The Mother-Child Home Program in Nassau County, New York, found an average I.Q. gain of seventeen points for children in the program (Lem, 1974). This resulted in the conclusion that mothers could be effectively trained. Lovaas (1978) reported a study in which follow-up data indicated that mothers trained to work with autistic children were effective as teaching agents long after the training program's termination. A study by Levenstein and Sunley (1968) showed an increase in verbal intelligence of children due to parental interaction training. Similarly, Jakab (1972) utilizing psychotherapy with families of autistic children, found changes in mother-child interaction concurrent with changes in mother - therapist interaction. Brown et al. (1976) studied the effects of parental control and behavior modification on parent-child interactions and found parents to be effective in modifying their children's behavior. Parents in a study reported by MacDonald (1976) commented on the improvement of their own interaction and attitudes toward their children in addition to increased language skills due to their involvement in the teaching process. Klein (1975) researched the effect of a Saturday school combined with home instruction in the Ferguson - Florissant School District in Missouri. Her analysis showed growths in teachers', parents' and children's attitudes and knowledge. In conclusion, it appears that parents can be effective in improving certain skills and abilities of their children.

Effectiveness, however, is dependent upon several factors. McCroskey and Baird (1971) studied the effectiveness of randomly selected parents as trainers of their school-aged children with functional articulation disorders. Their results indicated that there was no significant improvement. They therefore cautioned that parents must be motivated and willing to participate in order for improvement to occur. Other programs (Schwartz et al., 1966; MacDonald et al., 1974), stressed the importance of the willingness of the parents to cooperate and found favorable results. Therefore, it appears that when parents are willing to become involved prior to the program commencement, favorable results can be obtained.

Parental cooperation is not the only important factor for success. Neifert and Gayton (1973) outlined some reasons why home programs succeed. The following success factors were noted: interested and involved parents, good mother-child relationships, families void of numerous problems, small families, use of a fixed practice time, and involvement of parents, teachers, clinicians, educational therapists and the child in a team approach. Bennett (1957) and Sommers et al. (1964) found open, cooperative attitudes to be the most crucial factors in successful home program implementation. Carrier (1970) suggested that the most important factor was the relaying of simple, clear instructions to the parents. However, even though parents may meet all criteria for success, there are parents who cannot be trained

effectively. Lillywhite (1948) expounded on those types of parents: the mother needing psychological help, the employed mother who cannot set aside the necessary time, the mother who is not willing to cooperate, and the mother who cannot fully understand the procedures. Lovaas (1978) reported unsuccessful results when utilizing autistic children's parents who lacked interest in their children or whose children had to be cared for away from the home due to the intense severity of the children's handicaps. Similarly, Luterman (1970) encountered failure with parents who had severe problems themselves. Bennett (1957) found that parents and/or children with poor physical health, children with multiple handicaps, parents who were too involved at home or socially all demonstrated failure in teaching their children effectively.

In summary, it appears that parents can be taught to effectively teach their children through utilization of home programs if they are willing to cooperate, have the necessary time, are sincerely interested, do not have numerous social or familial interference problems or obligations, demonstrate healthy relationships with their children, are capable of understanding the procedures involved, are closely supervised by a trained professional, and are carefully trained by qualified individuals.

There have been numerous methods used to effectively teach parents to train their children. They have ranged from

utilizing the telephone (Hofmeister and Atkinson, 1976) and television (Schwartz et al., 1966; Currie et al., 1969; Striefel, 1972) to ones employing self-teaching methods (Black et al., 1963; Becker, 1971; Holland and Skinner, 1961; Patterson and Gullion, 1968; Montgomery, 1971; Keith, 1974; Lauder, 1972). Other methods may be categorized into three broad groups: those utilizing an instructional model, those employing videotapes, and those using modeling techniques (Lovaas, 1978). Included in the instructional model group would be the utilization of workshops (Slater, 1971/72; Lillie, 1972), correspondence (Góralówna, 1974; Bennett, 1957; Montague, 1949), texts (Bannatyne, 1973; Breiling, 1977; Ginglend and Stiles, 1965; Panyan, 1972; Baldwin and Fredericks, 1973; Battin et al., 1968; Hatten and Hatten, 1974; Ewing and Ewing, 1971; Semple, 1970; Rosen, 1972; Keith, 1972; Gordon et al., 1972; Heasley and Grosklos, 1976; Shere, 1961; Shriner, 1961; Mallory, 1961; Robbins, 1963; Smith and Smith, 1964; Zwitman, 1978), and books, articles or pamphlets that give useful suggestions (Parsons, 1967; Langdon, 1931; Finnie, 1974; Karnes, 1973). The second category, which employs the use of videotapes, has been used mainly for visually taping the parent-child interaction. This is later played back to the parent followed by a discussion with a supervisor. As a result, strengths and weaknesses are pinpointed. Nardine (1974), Lillie (1972) and Castle and Warchol (1974) have all used videotapes to provide feedback. The third broad group consists of modeling procedures. This may be strictly modeling where the teachers

demonstrate procedures the parents are to use (Seitz and Hoekenga, 1974; Lem, 1974). Also included in this category would be the utilization of play therapy illustrations (Andronico and Blake, 1971), and actual home demonstration techniques (Horton, 1975; Martin, 1975; Northcott, 1973; Stack, 1973; Berglund, 1973; Castle and Warchol, 1974; Shearer and Shearer, 1976). Within all of these procedures, group or individual instruction has taken place. The method which appears to have been used most often is the instructional method, especially the utilization of texts. A combination of methods has also been widely used.

Whether a single method or some combination of methods was used, parental programs have been designed to deal with many different types of handicaps. They have also been developed to aid in the development of the normal person. There are handbooks available to teach parents how to deal with raising a child beginning before birth (Resnick, 1970). Suggestions to foster psychological and educational developments are given by Langdon (1931) in a book designed to help parents rear children from birth to age six. Emotional development of the normal young child is also emphasized in a manual by Wolf (1941). Books for developing effective parenting skills in general are also available. Several of these teach the parents how to use behavior modification and are designed as self-teaching tools (Smith and Smith, 1964; Patterson and Gullion, 1968; Becker, 1971). O'dell (1974)

reviewed seventy articles containing discussions on the utilization of behavior modification techniques for rearing children.

With respect to handicapped individuals, behavior modification has also been used in dealing with autistic children. Examples of how parents can employ behavior modification principles when working with their autistic children are outlined in an article by Howlin et al. (1973), and developed within a program discussed by Lovaas (1978). Dyslexia, an impairment of the ability to read, like autism, is a perplexing disorder and Clarke (1973) has explained how parents can perceive its existence and deal with it effectively.

Another handicap, deafness, has been dealt with in numerous home programs which are currently available. Language enhancement programs available for the deaf utilize videotape analysis (Nardine, 1974; Lillie, 1972), texts (Ewing and Ewing, 1971), and home demonstration techniques (Northcott, 1973; Stack, 1973). A large home demonstration program which focuses on early detection and compensation for the hearing-impaired child is utilized by the Bill Wilkerson Hearing and Speech Center in Nashville, Tennessee (Horton, 1975; Martin, 1975). Another center, the John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles, California, provides a correspondence course in English and Spanish for parents of deaf children between the ages of two and six (Montague, 1949; Bennett, 1957). The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf through their Volta Bureau provides free information kits and inexpensive helpful booklets to parents of deaf

children upon request (Rotter, 1969). Ostern (1960) and Woodward (1960) have developed texts to aid parents in strengthening reading skills in their deaf children.

Aid for parents of children who have multiple handicaps is also available. There are handbooks for parents of deaf-blind children which aid in the development of speech skills and self-help skills such as washing, toileting, eating, dressing, and sleeping (Esche and Griffin, n.d.; Robbins, 1963). Parental help manuals for developing the aforementioned skills in children with cerebral palsy are also available (Shriner, 1961; Finnie, 1974). Other programs for children with cerebral palsy employ activities to strengthen motor skills such as sucking, chewing and swallowing necessary for speech development (Palmer, 1947; Shere, 1961). Cliff et al. (1974) have formulated a workbook to teach motor and language skills to children with cerebral palsy or mental retardation. Language facilitation for the mentally retarded has also been taught at home through television (Striefel, 1972), books (Mallory, 1961; Gordon et al., 1972) and programs such as the Portage Project (Shearer and Shearer, 1972; 1976).

Children with aphasia who have impaired speech skills may be helped by their parents through the use of a workbook by DuBard (1974). Adults with aphasia may be helped to regain speech by their spouses (Goodkin, 1969), families (Boone, 1967; Keith, 1972), or by themselves (Montgomery, 1971). Self-help manuals are also available for adult laryngectomees (Lauder,

1972; Keith, 1974). Adults with children who stutter can also help themselves overcome their own problems in dealing with these children (Andronico and Blake, 1971; Zwitman, 1978).

Parental teaching manuals are also available for parents of children with delayed language skills. Toys are involved in the home teaching of children in a program by Karnes (1973), in which suggestions are given for teaching language through stimulation, carry-over and review by utilizing common household objects. Activities are based on approximate difficulty levels and psycholinguistic learning areas. A handbook by Heasley and Grosklos (1976) employs home constructed language teaching materials to promote the development of language skills in children. Another program designed to enhance language acquisition involves common activities as teaching channels (Egerer, 1975). Battin et al. (1968) and Rosen (1972) have developed language programs to aid parents in enhancing stimulation, motivation, reinforcement, decreased echolalic speech, the establishing of a routine, and an awareness of children's language problems. Hatten and Hatten (1974) have formulated a home language program for parents of young children consisting of suggestions for aiding in the development of language related, pre-language, and receptive and expressive language skills. There are numerous language programs used by speech therapists which are advertised as applicable to parents' use (Ausberger, 1976; Dunn and Smith, 1968; Dunn et al., 1976; Goldman and Lynch, 1971; McCarr, 1978;

Mecham, 1974). Some of these advertised programs require special training, are quite bulky and expensive and therefore impractical for parents to use.

Upon careful examination of language home programs presently on the market, it appears that few systematic, easy to follow, specific parental programs are available. None of the language programs have assignment sheets, response sheets and built-in parental contracts which, if used properly under professional supervision, help to assure full cooperation between all involved. The inclusion of a contract is important because it provides a guarantee that parents are willing to cooperate before the program is put into use. Lovaas (1978) reported using a parental contract with success. The Fox Basic Language Home Program (Appendix A) incorporates response sheets, assignment charts and contracts into its structure. Also included are simple instructions, suggestions and pictures for teaching basic concepts, and large action pictures used to teach systematic syntax acquisition. The steps used for each action picture were designed to aid language acquisition in a sequence that is similar to that which would occur in natural development (Brown, 1970; Gesell, 1960; McCarthy, 1975; Sanders, 1972; Templin, 1975; Trantham, 1976). The program is not bulky; rather, it is in a workbook form designed so that the child may look at the target picture while the parent simultaneously reads the stimulus phrases or sentences, eliciting imitative and spontaneous responses. The child is

systematically led, for each picture, through seventeen sentence steps, with each successive step presenting a more complex syntactic sentence structure. After mastery of the same sentence step for all twenty pictures and therefore mastery of twenty sentences, the parent and child proceed to the next sentence step and repeat the process with twenty more sentences which are syntactically more complex than the previous sentences at the lower step. Basic concepts are taught concretely using objects (suggestions are provided) and abstractly using pictures contained in the program. The Fox Basic Language Home Program requires sincere parental cooperation and necessitates the establishment of routine practice.

Several authors have pinpointed the advantages of using parents as language trainers at home. Carrier (1970) explained that what is to be learned should be taught in the environment in which it is expected to be used. Expansion of parental involvement in language training may result in increasing their ability to maximize the probability of integrating changes into everyday occurrences. In addition, using parents as teachers can save precious time and reduce the number of professionals needed, of which there is a shortage. Shearer and Shearer (1976) pointed out that utilizing parents ensures the occurrence of learning in the child's natural environment; this provides an opportunity for family participation in the teaching process. Lovaas (1978 p.375) said,

...it may also reflect the growing awareness that if children are a product of their environment, that environment may have to be changed. In such an enlightened environment everyone is a therapist, and that includes parents.

It seems, then, that it would be a sound educational practice to use parents to supplement-teach their language-delayed children at home. The Fox Basic Language Home Program, in the form of a self-explanatory text, is designed to be easily learned and to require little supervision. Therefore, if it could be found to be an effective change agent involving parents, language learning would take place in the child's natural environment and much of the therapist's time and energy could be re-directed.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to 1) present the Fox Basic Language Home Program and 2) ascertain whether improvement of language skills occurred among five individuals of varying ages diagnosed as language-delayed after using the Fox Basic Language Home Program in conjunction with an ongoing language program in a clinic. In addition, the study sought to determine if individual and mean improvement gains were greater than that which occurred after participating in a clinical language program that did not utilize the Fox Basic Language Home Program.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subjects

Five individuals, enrolled in language therapy at the University of Texas at El Paso Speech, Hearing and Language Clinic and previously diagnosed as language-delayed, served as subjects. The subjects involved exhibited a wide range of difficulties: two of the subjects, M.V. and M.D., had been diagnosed as autistic; one subject, R.C., had childhood aphasia and complicating emotional instabilities; another, N.R., had minimal brain dysfunction with motor and perceptual impairment; and the fifth subject, A.A., had neurological impairment and was exclusively Spanish-speaking. The subjects' ages ranged from eight years, four months to twenty-six years, four months with a mean age of fifteen years, seven months. Since the study was intended to be a within-subject time series design, no attempt was made to match subjects on variables other than the pre-program criteria of language delay diagnosis and enrollment in language therapy. Hence, the design of the study allowed each subject to serve as his own control. This type of design has been advocated and recently used in numerous studies, especially those that dealt with aphasia (Ventry and Schiavetti, 1980 p.238; LaPointe, 1978 p.133). Prior to the start of the study, the subjects' parents were contacted to ensure their willingness to participate in the experiment.