

MULTIMODAL ART THERAPY TO OVERCOME COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES AMONG PRESCHOOLERS

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ABSTRACT

A key feature of the contemporary socio-cultural situation is the need for a multi-level constructive communication with a constantly changing and increasingly complex environment. The problem with this situation is the low capacity of a man to adapt to the peculiarities of a situation and to acquire the necessary communicative competences in a natural way: the requirements for the quantity and the quality of daily communicative acts often exceeds the capacities of a single person for a constructive interaction development adequate for a situation. The aim of this study was to develop a program which would overcome the difficulties of communication among preschool children by the means of a multimodal art therapy. The choice of a multimodal art therapy as a means of communication barrier overcoming was determined by its focus on the gaining of non-verbal interaction experience by the means of various types of art and the development of non-verbal communication skills. During the research we used the theoretical methods of scientific knowledge, which allowed to identify the characteristics that prevent the establishment of a constructive interaction among preschool children. Used diagnostic methods allowed to explore the dynamics of the selected features during the monitoring process. During the study they developed the program to overcome the communication difficulties among preschool children by the means of a multimodal art therapy. The testing of the developed program revealed its effectiveness as one of the possible forms for elementary communicative competence development among preschool children.

Keywords: *communication, communication difficulties, multimodal art therapy, art, non-verbal communication, imagination modality*

INTRODUCTION

The development of communication as an individual ability to organize and maintain an adequate and constructive interaction with the outside world remains one of the priority problems of modern interdisciplinary research (psychology, pedagogy, sociology, medicine, etc.). Indeed, communicative competence, the ability to navigate and integrate in the communication processes of different levels is essential for a modern positive socialization, a harmonious mental development, learning and self-realization.

It is known that pre-school age is the sensitive period of an emotional sphere development and an initial communicative competence closely related to it. The Russian studies of recent years (N.A. Ageeva, T.N. Knyazeva, N.S. Kozhanova, E.N. Krutyakova, L.N. Kuzmenkova, I.Yu. Makarova, I.V. Martynenko, O.A. Mayurova, Samohvalova A.G. (A.G. Samohvalova, 2011), E.V. Semakova, A.V. Semenovich, Sidorova E.V. et al.) show that the number of children who have some communication difficulties increases. At that, only some of them are directly related to communication (in particular, to voice

communication), most communicative disorders have a secondary nature and are found among different groups of children. There are children with neurological and somatic diagnoses, as well as with different border and psychological disorders among them: attention deficit and hyperactivity syndrome with a variety of autism spectrum disorders, the violations of the emotional sphere development (anxiety, aggressiveness, emotional rigidity, etc.), left-handedness, with the violations of social behavior norms (impulsivity, inadequate behavioral patterns and psychological distance, etc.).

However, these studies do not demonstrate the uniformity in the use of terminology (communication disorders, communication difficulties, the breach of communicative behavior, etc.) and a common understanding of communicative difficulty nature.

Within the framework of our study communicative difficulties are the violation of one or more communication functions (information and communication (reception and transmission of verbal and non-verbal information), regulatory and communication (the organization of an interaction situation, self-correction of emotional states and actions) and affective-communicative function (purposeful or involuntary change of communication entity state).

The communication phenomenon includes two components: verbal and nonverbal one. The focus of our research is a non-verbal aspect of communication, since, according to study data conducted by I.A. Skopylatov, a direct speech makes 7% in each communication unit of interaction, intonation and sound ratio make 38%, a non-verbal interaction makes 53% (I.A. Skopylatov, O.Yu. Efremov, 2011), which is especially characterizes the age peculiarities of preschoolers.

During the process of scientific research theoretical study in the field of communication skills, abilities and competencies among preschoolers (G.M. Andreeva, M.V. Ermolaeva, I.G. Erofeeva, M.I. Lisin, V.S. Mukhin et al.) we identified the following indicators that influence the occurrence of communicative difficulties among preschoolers and which have expressed non-verbal manifestations: the level of anxiety, aggressiveness, the capacity for empathy, impulsiveness availability, the ability to recognize an emotional state of an other one according to non-verbal signs.

The aim of our study was the identification of multi-modal art therapy methods to overcome the communication difficulties of preschoolers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

One reason for socialization difficulty and the lack of success in the teaching of a modern child is the discrepancy between biosocialcultural environment and the sustainable mechanisms of his psychological (neuro-psycho-somatic) competence. The solution of an identified problem is the neuropsychological program support for preschool children support on the basis of replacing ontogenesis method developed by A.V. Semenovich (2015). An undoubted value of a developed program is somewhat reduced by an insufficient consideration of the age characteristics among the children of this age (eye-mindedness, leading play activity, the sensitive period of imagination development, the exploration and research activity and creativity).

Dzh. Ayres (Dzh. Ayres, 2008) and W. Kiessling (W. Kiesling, 2016) studies show that in order to improve the results of a correctional developmental impact the most effective and reasonable work is the work at the stages preceding the desired level of development. In particular, within the framework of our study, it is a corrective developing impact on the level of sensory integration.

Thus, the working hypothesis of this study was the approval that it is inefficient to make a direct impact on existing communication difficulties. The implementation of correctional and developmental work at

the previous level of development is more appropriate - the level of sensory integration and the development of non-verbal communication taking into account the age peculiarities among preschoolers.

The methodology of multimodal art therapy (expressive art therapy) is the most appropriate one to set goals and objectives the basic provisions of which are the following statements:

1. In contrast to the classical art therapy aimed at an expressive splash activation, multimodal art therapy involves the interaction at all possible levels:
 - at the level of a body, emotions and meanings (the triad: movement - emotional reaction - comprehension);
 - the establishment of cooperation with various aspects of "I", including the resistance;
 - the interaction with the creative activity products as with rightful subjects of the art process.
2. The creativity through creation - the creation of a finished creative product as the acquisition of reality new experience through various imagination modalities (N. Rodzhers, 2015).
3. The development of a multimodal art therapy "embodiment" through an own experience.
4. In the concept of multimodal art therapy imagination manifests itself through sensory systems - the modality of imagination.
5. During the creation of art objects we rely on the imagination and its modalities. Within the concept of multimodal art therapy the imaging of modalities is movement, sound, image, rhythm, word and action. The modalities of imagination is the way of communication with the world to "see" what we experience and how (P. Knill, Barba H.N., M.N. Fuchs, 2005). The more imagination modalities is used, the brighter and more meaningful an expression is, the more appropriate communication forms and content.

According to the theoretical positions by Dzh. Ayres and W. Kiessling, the practical neuropsychological exercises by A.V. Semenovich and the principles and methods of multimodal art therapy, we developed and tested the program of communicative difficulties overcoming, based on the art analogy "Journey to the hill country".

22 preschool age children took part in the study conducted on the basis of "Kangaroo" NSEE. According to the pilot experiment results, 14 people were diagnosed with a high level of anxiety, 5 children demonstrated an aggressive behavior, 3 preschoolers had the emotional sphere violations, manifested in the excessive rigidity of emotional reactions, shyness and in the stiffness of external expressive reactions.

The monitoring of the study included 2 stages: preliminary and final diagnosis.

The diagnostic package was represented by the following techniques:

1. The children test to determine the level of anxiety, R. Temml, M. Dorcy and V. Amen (Korepanova M.V., Kharlamova E.V., 2005).
2. The test "child aggressiveness level" by G.P. Lavrentieva and T.M. Titarenko.

3. The test determining impulsiveness-reflexivity ratio "The comparison of similar images" by G. Kagan.
4. The test determining an empathy level by I.M. Yusupov (adapted to preschool age).
5. The methods of an interlocutor emotion recognition "The reflection of feelings" by O.V. Dybina (O.V. Dybina, S.E. Anfisova, A. Yu. Kuzina and I.V. Gruzdova, 2008).

RESULTS

The result of the study was the development and the testing of the program for communication difficulties overcoming among children "The journey to the hill country", designed for the children of senior preschool age.

The program "The journey to the hill country" is based on the art analogy "the journey as the way of new communicative and sensory experience acquiring".

The name of stages, the content and the form of used games and exercises are presented in Table 1.

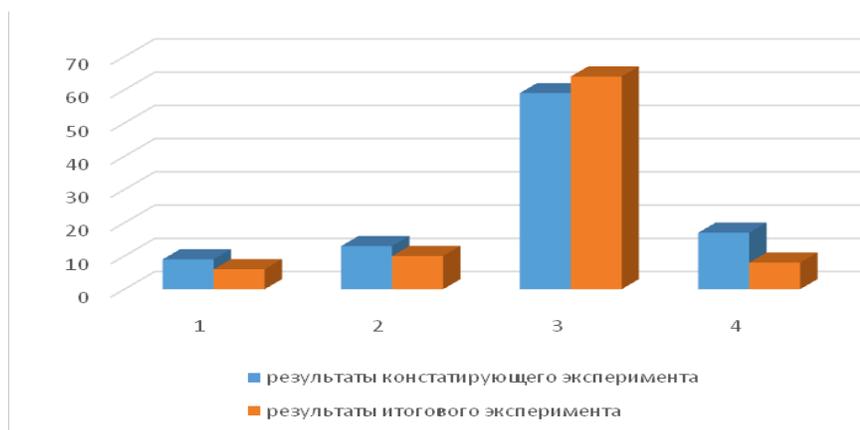
Table 1. The art action plan within the art analogy "The journey to the hill country"

art analogy stages	name	purpose	session structure stage, function	imagination modality	equipment
grand settlement	greeting	acquaintance	session start	movement	expressive movement + the name, presentation in a circle
	camp territory exploration	"revival", the awakening of a body	session start, heating	movement	introduction to a space (different qualities of movement, contact with different surfaces by different parts of a body)
training camp: safety rules and procedures	learn the ways of movement in the mountains	group synchronization	session start, heating	movement	follow...
	climbing with a partner	synchronization with a partner	session start, heating	movement	contact improvisation: without losing the contact with a partner by any part of a body
	"don't look down"	group synchronization	session start, heating	movement, music, rhythm	roundelay
	"always maintain three points of support"	creativity enhancement	session start, an unusual entry	movement	a body posture change and the movement with 3 points of support

	"ice, rocks, cracks and tunnels"	sensorimotor coordination, hemispheric cooperation strengthening	the main part, sensorimotor game		variants of movement: slide, crawl, jump, we try a support reliability, looking for a balance
	"mountain echo"		the main part, game	sound	the provision of certain sound in a circle: fading, with attenuation, gain, acceleration, next nearest
	"polished cliff"	the development of kinesthetic empathy, non-verbal interaction skills, synchronization with a partner	the main part, game	movement	the technique of "mirror", "carousel"
	"packing a backpack"	available resources, reassessment of values, prioritization	the main part, game		what is available in bags or what will be taken as necessary (7 items), making a backpack lighter (5-3 objects - ranking)
climbing up	"the signs on the road"	resource search and intensifying	the main part, creativity	image (visual art)	scratchboard (scraping an image on cardboard with a multilayer coating by different colors)
	"visiting a hermit"		the main part, creativity	musical improvisation	individual sounding - in small groups - orchestra
	"the storm in the mountains"		the main part, creativity	rhythmic improvisation	small groups, collective orchestra
	"halt: high above sea level"	resource search and intensifying	the main part, creativity	image (visual art-sound-movement)	intermodal technology (relaxation-meditation) music + text) - then the work with resource images (drawing, etc.)
	"strange animals"	resource search and intensifying	the main part, creativity	the image (natural materials)	working in pairs, the collective multi-level installation

	"big foot"	dealing with anger, fears and limitations	the main part, creativity	the image (modeling, 3d - model of paper, paint)	modeling, solid modeling
	"rainbow over the waterfall"	acting out of emotions	the main part, creativity	the image (visual art)	spraying technique (individual work, group collage)
return to the camp	"about camp life"	understanding of their social roles, interaction patterns, the development of new strategies	the main part, creativity	theater	a client or a group member, a director, staging a scene of a camp life
	"Tales around the campfire"	Search for resources	The main part, creativity	Poetry	Individual tale (from doodles) - collective story
	"Souvenir shop"	Understanding and consolidation of changes	Completion, «gathering of fruits»	The image (natural materials)	Making of amulets, talismans from natural materials
	"Memory photo" (in a tourist outfit)		Completion, «gathering of fruits»	The image (costume)	The creation of tissue, paper, newspaper, adhesive tape, tourist image: hat, backpack, tourist accessories

The dynamics of the studied parameters before and after the implementation of the program "The journey to the hill country" for communication difficulties overcoming among children is shown on Figure 1.



Результаты констатирующего эксперимента – ascertaining experiment results

Результаты итогового эксперимента – Final experiment results

Fig.1 The dynamics of indicators before and after the implementation of the program which overcome communication difficulties among children

1. Anxiety level.
2. The level of aggression.
3. The level of empathy.
4. The level of ability to recognize an emotional state of another one.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the performed study allow to make the following conclusions:

1. Non-verbal communication components make a significant impact on the effectiveness of preschooler communication.
2. The indicators of communication difficulties among preschoolers selected by us (the level of anxiety, the level of aggressiveness, the capacity for empathy, impulsiveness availability, the ability to recognize an emotional state of another one on non-verbal grounds) have expressed observed non-verbal manifestations, preventing the establishment and maintenance of a harmonious constructive interaction among preschool children.
3. Multimodal art therapy has a great potential in the field of emotional and communicative problems overcoming among preschool children due to an active use of non-verbal communication means in the framework of artistic and creative activities and the expressive means of various arts.
4. The monitoring results concerning the program "The journey to the hill country" for communication difficulties overcoming among children showed the following:
 - significantly decreased level of anxiety (from 9 points (high level) to 6 (average level)),
 - the level of aggressiveness decreased (from 13 points (pronounced level) to 10 (the upper limit of an average level)),
 - a positive dynamics in empathy development is observed (59 points during the ascertaining stage of the experiment and 63 points during the final stage), but no significant differences were found;
 - the differences in impulsivity manifestation were not found, which indicates a high dependence of this index on physiological and neuropsychological factors according to our opinion;
 - they revealed a significant difference of indicators concerning the ability to recognize an emotional state of an other one by non-verbal signs (8 and 17 points, respectively).

5. The results of the performed study revealed a positive trend in the correction of negative manifestations for nonverbal interaction, preventing the constructive interaction and facilitating the emergence of communicative difficulties.

SUMMARY

Thus, the developed program "The journey to the hill country" for communication difficulties overcoming among children by the means of multimodal art therapy, aimed at the recognition of non-verbal signals from an other interaction participant, the correction of non-verbal manifestations adversely affecting communication, the development of non-verbal interaction constructive skills, helps to overcome the communication difficulties among preschoolers.

However, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the developed program it is necessary to note the need of correctional and development work aimed at communicative skills development as the means of valuable orientations and moral-aesthetic culture development which determine the quality and the form of communication (Kamaloovaetal., 2014), as well as the way of multicultural education and communicative interaction (Valiahmetovaetal, 2014;. Karkinaetal, 2014.).

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