

ART FORMATION AND VERBAL MORPHOLOGY IN ART THERAPY

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Abstract

In this report we aim to consider the various aspects of verbal communication in art therapy practice through the special use of verbal morphology for methodological development of topics for therapeutic cases, through creative reproduction of visual-verbal images.

In the process of our many years of practice we were provoked by the dualism of therapeutic choice in art therapy - achieving results through verbal interventions during the material process of shaping the work or through non-verbal communication through the language of the arts only.

The described results, which so to speak pacify the two final theses in methodological terms, are the result of a one-year study through transformative art therapy work with people with various physical and mild mental disabilities at the Center for Social Rehabilitation and Integration in Sofia. Classical methods for collecting materials and analysis suitable for the given research case are used.

Key words: art therapy, verbal communication, verbal morphology

Art therapy of today is not only a form of treating people suffering from psychic and physical diseases, emotional traumas or daily failures by the help of art and creative process strength but covers various update artistic forms by which man can demonstrate his experience and problems, view them from a different side and find a new way to his self.

Living contact between the participants in the sessions lays in the bases of the successful art therapeutic work. The communication between the therapist and the client within the art therapeutic practice is part of the triad interrelations reasoning the result from the art therapeutic process. Such a communication is multifaced and depends on the life experience, personal qualities and the professionalism of the leading therapist. Choices are imposed very often in relation to the psycho therapeutic methods and principles where predominating is the verbal communication and simultaneously the need of putting a focus on art where we all know verbal communication is available with materials, ideas and images.

Transforming images into words and words into images may be simultaneously both a method and means for achieving multitude of purposes in the art therapeutic work. Universal daily experience can very often be found in parables, sayings, proverbs and other forms of the so-called folklore. Pure verbal use of these samples has not always got transforming result. It is imposed to transform that impact into purposeful and effective by game and creative process. To use the strength of the words while accepting and processing the meaning of their message or using their directing and structuring strength and energy as motivating instruments for performing certain acts. These ratiocinations stay in the bases of our purpose – to study the possibility for achieving therapeutic effect by visual-creative recreation of verbal images and their methodological development in themes for therapeutic cases.

If we come back to the communication between the therapist and the client, most suitable will be Françoise Dolteu's recommendations that one is needed “... by his/her presence to listen to the other to such a degree that he/she changes the way he/she passes the contents of his/her image” (Dolteu 2006). Said in short, the therapist, performing a session in art therapy according to Dilteu, should consider his/her answer, directing the thought movement to the communication.

The authors of the book “Principles and practice of the expressive art therapy” share the following on the matter: “One of the basic steps in the process is to differentiate and completely take hold of the alternative experience of the world. Such an experience within the phenomenological tradition should

be through the conversation in the way it occurs in the given situation. We call it a conversation about the imaginary reality” (Knill, Levin & Levin 2005).

Psychology, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis impact their clients mainly by words. It is accepted that art therapists armed by the means of the various kinds of art can communicate with their clients nonverbally too. According to the general opinion, which we join too, art therapy succeeds where many other therapeutic approaches are helpless but it is just the right place to consider some successful mechanisms about the use of the verbal communication in the art therapeutic practice too in spite of and through the means of the artistic arts.

In defense of our statement we shall base on Gerard Giro’s words shared in the preface of Françoise Dolteu’s book “Everything is a language”. He says the following: The statement that everything is a language underlines, with Lakan’s conceptual neighborhood, the importance and the primary role of the words reaching further to its body consequences in the cases when the body witnesses for the relational symbolism, functioning in man’s subject, nevertheless how young he is. In that way, through the body and the flesh everything acquires the “meaning of a language” for the human being. In that way the body is personified and is transformed into a body of a subject who says (Dolteu 2006).

During our long years of practice as art therapists we have had the possibility to observe how people of various injuries with whom we have worked, succeeded to transform the physical irritations in words, images and other abstract notions. All that happened thanks to the communicative connection between the individual and the environment in which he/she lived. Exactly such a connection and its acceptance and realization are subject of the therapist’s work and his/her client. Their dialogue is to a greater degree a sign and covers understanding about image projection and reflection.

When creating art therapeutic methodologies and most of all for the idea setting when solving the individual cases, we use the words as energy-image means for a transfer. Energy like, because of the message for certain action reasoned by the logical meaning and vice-versa forming perception or anticipation.

We take as an example the word GRATITUDE, which can be treated as DONATE BLESSING, hence treating its both words as GIVE, DONATE GENTLENESS /as character/ or WELL-BEING /as material position/, hence – PRESENT FOR GRATITUDE – PRESENT FOR ASKING BLESSING. Within the process of the art therapeutic session, through creative process, the client with whom we are working on a given problem, should come to the belief that I GIVE, in order to RECEIVE or in order to receive, I *have* to GIVE. What to give? PRESENT FOR BLESSING or TO DONATE BLESSING. Here is formatted the purpose setting of the transformation wanted during the time of the art session – IF I WORK – SHALL RECEIVE, NOTHING IS GIVEN ME AS PRESENT

The example is suitable for Bulgarian language but the mechanism illustrated by it is universally applicable in all languages. Here a game of words is demonstrated which transforms /changes, make transfer of the form /image/ which we want to suggest.

Vladimir Nikitin offers an ontological explanation of the image. He says that the perception of the image is caused by feelings and associations. Perception act passed on at an informational-energy level. The image is born within the process of organization of the multilayer system of afferentation, responsible for perception and procession of the outside information, having many meanings for the observer (Nikitin & Tsanev 2017). Here comes the conclusion that the image of a given word or subject formalized by this word appears as generalized knowledge for its function and is formed in the process of establishing an attitude towards it. It is that that we strive to in our work as art therapists – to help the client form such an attitude to a given problem so he/she can alone come to the change wished.

When we dress in words some image or phenomenon, we formalize it, close it within these frames which we have set up. That is our point about that image or phenomenon, but by pronouncing it we share it with the others – it is not only our formal view already, but it becomes such for the environment. That is why we, Bulgarians often say “What is said, is said” – we have performed a transfer of thoughts and ideas and doing so we change the environment and the people. We provoke

thoughts and actions for the TRANSFORMATION passing but we can achieve DEFORMATION too by the help of the INFORMATION used. By that example we want to illustrate the reason because of which, after creating an image by the creative process during the art therapeutic session, it is of particular importance that the participant or the participants give name/title to what they have created and share it out loud with those present. Giving name to the creative image and saying it out loud in space, before other people, is dual therapeutic instrument consisting of verbal communication between client, work and therapist. In that way simultaneously are used a creating model for intervention and psycho-therapeutic model for practicing art. Pressure is balanced around the question where to put the accent in the art therapeutic work – on the art/creative part or on the psycho therapeutic part. The conclusion is that for reaching stable realistic result we need both parts in more of the cases.

Other explanation connecting the images with the individual formation and development of man, which can be applied in the art therapeutic practice is given by K.G.Jung who writes that "... the instinct for life which is expressed in the individual formation of a living being, provoking processes in unconsciousness or in its partial awareness, is presented as assembled range of images. People having natural introspective abilities can percept, without great efforts, at least particles from that anonymous or only dynamic sequence, most often in the form of impressions of the imagination where by the way they often become captives of incorrect views that that they have realized these fantasies while in reality they have only occurred to them"(Jung 2011).

Here comes to help the effective-creative part of each art therapeutic session – converting the images into material which often will by sensory transfer the client from fantasy to the real world. One is the symbolic contents of the imagination. The other is the emotional sensor experience. Or, as Paolo G. Knill says: "Both sources of alternative experience of the world – the symbol contents of the imagination and the emotional sensory experience – can be used in the process of interpretations" (Knill, Levin & Levin 2005).

We shall give still another example with which a theme for art therapeutic session can be initiated – from the word ON ONE'S OWN. Following a morphological analysis, we build up the following scheme. ON ONE'S OWN /ALONE/- LONELINESS – LONELY, which is dropped into the following meaningful constructions, as ON ONE'S OWN /ALONE/ in between people or ALONE but not LONELY, as well as the vice versa – I AM NOT ALONE but LONELY. Such a scheme serves as setting purposes for discussing LONELINESS as a state and by what means we can cope with it. According to the phase of the alternative experience, at the beginning the client leaves the troublesome logic of the everyday life and enters into the logic of imagination. Anyway, during the nest transfer the client faces the contrast of the imaginary and real world. Such a transfer can be effected in both directions several times during the art therapeutic session, where the so-called decentralization is obtained which provides a diapason for creative recreation.

Judging from examples as the above cited we have created a range of 14 methodological themes for art therapeutic work on various individual cases. We have selected the problems on which to work by the art therapy methods on the basis of individual evaluation of the needs and individual plan for support, prepared in advance by the multidisciplinary team at the Center for social rehabilitation and integration of disabled people to "Karitas Sofia" organization. The prevailing problems were related to the lack of self-esteem and motivation for coping with domestic difficulties and social isolation. For more than half of the working themes we have used popular Bulgarian proverbs or such of foreign authors. They covered working in cases as: boredom, loneliness, deadlock, impossibility to make choices and taking decisions, lack of knowledge about emotional states, lack of tolerance, over exceeded expectations, non-fulfilled promises, lack of empathy, etc. Greater part of the tasks during the art therapeutic sessions served integrated purposes of other therapists from the multidisciplinary team too – kinesytherapy, logopaedists, social pedagogue. That fact influenced as well to a greater degree for accentuating on the verbal communication and word morphologization which we have applied to the mentioned cases.

The therapeutic sessions were held for one year with 16 persons of various physical disabilities, with comparatively preserved intellect and non-infringed verbal abilities. The participants were from 18 to

36 years of age. The effected transforming therapeutic experiment was held in the natural environment of the therapeutic center which they visited according to their program and schedule for work.

Total 544 sessions were held during the year while each of the participants whom we are not going to differentiate by sex, took part in 2 individual sessions on each of the themes and one group session choosing one out of 6 themes. Each participant has taken part in 28 individual and 6 group sessions.

Each of the themes has been worked out by the help of artistic means as we are convinced that during an alternative experience of the world, the application of a creative process provides possibilities specific for art only. Having in mind the type and degree of the injuries of the participants, we have used various art materials as clay, plasticine, paper, various material for drawing, clay, clipping from newspapers for application and collage, various natural materials, etc.

We have used words with common or similar root for our verbal art therapeutic work while endeavoring to support the examples with visualization by their artistic image in the various arts.

Verbal communication during the art therapeutic sessions has many plans:

- In the preparation of the text, by using sayings and proverbs for the methodological bringing up of the personal case.
- During the purpose set up of the art therapeutic session /verbal structuring of the coming process/.
- Giving title/name to what is created during the session and its verbal presentation by the client.
- Dialogue talking of the aspects of the problem having appeared by giving an image of the feeling, emotions, ideas.
- Transformation of that image into a WORD.
- Therapeutic use of the energy fund of that word by calling, sharing, throwing out, liberating.
- Transfer of the personal case decisions from the used proverbs and sayings – in greater part of the cases, the clients achieve that alone.
- Here follow some of the themes which we have developed by the help of verbal morphology similar to the examples mentioned herein above.
- „Lack amidst plenty” by focusing on ONE’S OWN /ALONE/LONELINESS/LONELY
- „In a slapdash way” by focusing on WANT/SHOULD
- „Do not lose your time, do something” by focusing on WANT/SHOULD
- „Pandora’s box” by focusing on BOREDOM
- „What is said is said” by focusing on the PROMISE to the theme of FRIENDSHIP
- „Black and white” by focusing on I AM/I AM NOT
- „Confidence” – TILL I BELIEVE YOU/TILL YOU BELIEVE ME, ETC.

The use of words and the permanent verbal communication with the clients during the session not only improves their skills in that direction but also guarantees foreseeable results. Greater part of our suppositions could be verbally confirmed or rejected as the method of observation on disabled people behavior cannot be accepted for fully reliable because of their specific particularities reasoned by their various health state. At the end of each session we have introduced positive affirmations which have been formulated by the participants during the work in order to confirm and guarantee stable achievements.

During the long term work we have gathered rich fact-logical material under the form of regularly filled in protocols for the observation which have documented the process and the dynamic development of the observed details related to participation of the clients, their readiness to execute

the tasks, the communicative and communicational elements between the therapist, client and the readymade product in the middle.

Except for the above described instrument, many material art facts have been generated during each session as product of the creative process during the art sessions which have been in details analyzed according to a range of preliminary defined visual-communicative characteristics. Discussed were the composition, the characteristics of the various lines used in the work, characteristics of the colors, images and symbols used as well as the availability of plot frame – theme and contents characteristics.

Table 1 contains the results of the analysis of the visual-communicative characteristics of the creative art facts.

Visual-communicative characteristics	Disabled persons with slight degree of mental retardation
Composition	From a non-structured, open composition without particular accent till balanced compositional decisions of mixed points of view. The choice of the format is occasional, rarely orientate the form of the list according to the picture.
Characteristics of the lines	Basic pictorial element. Straight lines are prevailing in the direction of the comfortable inclination. Very often they are timid and insure, passing into interrupted strokes. When circulating a form, they are always closed.
Characteristics of the colors	The color numbered are of the bright register. Clean tones, without mixing them. Their selection is occasional. Using dark colors for framing contours.
Characteristics of the images	Closed, simple, concentric or consistent forms, with thick filled in sections. Draw people and animals but prefer to develop elements of the environment.
Characteristics of the symbols	Often in their drawings is found the first letter of their name, in most of the case changed to indistinguishable. Draw vehicles, cars, carts, bicycles, trucks with detail developed wheels – a symbol of the movement. Have preference for the circle, use it when describe symbols like the moon, the sun – with mouth and eyes.
Theme and contents characteristics	Chaotic or arranged lines with occasionally met houses, the sun, a man very rarely. When a plot is available, the accent is on the man again. Their drawings remind of stiff, monotonous tale. Always develop the background.
Typicalness and ritual	Typicalness of the actions is often met, the choice of the material, without observing that in contents plan. Livelier typicalness is observed in the selection of the themes. In their communication with the therapist, often striving towards ritual behavior is observed.
Communicative elements /autocommunication, communication with the material, image reflexion, communication with the therapist communication with the product, communication with the environment – reverse connection	Nearly all types of communications are observed. To a slight degree with the material and predominantly with the art therapist. Autocommunication is brightly outlined and communication with the environment (show what they have done, seek approval).

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The generalized results from the transforming art therapeutic sessions says that all participants have received support for their personal strength available and coping with their own thematic problem by achievements in the creative work and purposeful explanatory interpretations. The conclusion made can be formulated in the following way: the words used during the time of the active process of art therapeutic work can open a door for unexpected surprises and often appear together with spontaneity and intuition.

That is why the combined use of verbal impact and creative non-verbal communication indisputably is positive, characterized by greater stability and deepness of the therapeutic impact but is reasoned by the education and the professional direction of the therapist alone who is leading the art therapeutic practice.

The adequate and correctly dozed use of both approaches are strongly dependent on the practical professional experience of the art therapist.

In conclusion we express our deep thanks to the management of “Karitas Sofia” association for the faith given to us and the possibility to execute transforming art therapeutic experiment at “Blagoveshenie” Center for social rehabilitation and integration in the city of Sofia managed by them. The experience we have piled up will be used for the education of the higher students for the Master’s degree in “Art therapy” at “N.Pavlovich” National academy of art, Sofia.

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