

METAPHOR IN PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING FOR UKRAINIANS WITH CHILDREN WITH ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENT WHO FLED FROM WAR

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Abstract. *The aim of the article is to present the method of metaphor as a modern effective method that activates neurodynamic mechanisms of personality's reflection of actual life events and possibility of using various metaphor options in psychological counselling for Ukrainians with children with abnormal development, who fled from war. The use of metaphors allows a psychologist to safely provide appropriate information to the client and gently offer a solution of issues. This is what makes it possible to use a metaphor in psychological counselling. The authors propose to regard the metaphor as a means of obtaining information about the peculiarities of the relationship in the "Parents-Child" system. Depending on the content of the family life situation, metaphors can perform expressive, dissociative, diagnostic, explanatory functions. They are used in individual or group psychological counselling in several options: reading and discussing metaphors (expressed in parables, instructive stories, etc.) together with parents; discussing drawing with metaphors; working with metaphoric cards. The article gives examples of metaphors and includes factual information for psychologists at the end. Thus, metaphor usage by psychologist follows the counselling of parents of children with abnormal development from the moment of data collection to implementation of the last behavioral check of clinical intervention.*

Keywords: *metaphor, psychological counseling, parenting counseling, refugees, children with impaired mental and physical development.*

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Introduction. The war in Ukraine erased all the usual norms of life, changed the lifestyle of all Ukrainians, led to the fact that many families with children were forced to flee from Ukraine from hostilities and/or occupation of Ukrainian lands. The families that raise a child with impaired mental and physical development were among them. In such conditions, Ukrainians with special needs kids require psychological assistance. A psychologist has to provide professional assistance to all family members, work with parents who are in a state of stress. Behavior, emotional state of children with impaired mental and physical development may also change as a result of traumatic events, evacuation, and a sharp change in living conditions, and regression to the previous stage of development may occur. Therefore, the search for effective methods of processing current life events and relationships is an important issue in relation to provision of psychological assistance to this category of persons. In our opinion, such method of restructuring of experience used by a clinical psychologist with parents of children with abnormal development is a metaphor.

Development of modern psychology is characterized by the rapid emerging of new methods, procedures for data collection and analysis in the arsenal of this

science; approaches and theoretical views that challenge the accepted standards of the humanistic approach and reorient towards the reflexive awareness of human achievements, human culture and oneself. In this perspective of human cognition metaphor, as a special method of many branches of human science, plays a significant role. Metaphor communication features prominently in humanistic, existential psychology, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and Gestalt therapy. In many psychotherapeutic areas, metaphor is the methodological basis that forms the system of basic concepts. Examples of such system-forming metaphors are libido and cathexis in psychoanalysis; person, animus, shadow and self in the psychology of C. G. Jung; armor and orgone in body-oriented psychotherapy; anchor in NLP, etc.

D. Gordon (1995), J. Mills, R. Crowley (2000), M. Erickson and E. Rossi (1977) carried out studies of metaphor in psychology. The metaphorical meaning of the word in the common, scientific and fiction languages is analyzed in the works of J. Ortega y Gasset, A. Richards, J. Searle, R. Jacobson, M. Black (Arutyunova, Zhurinska, 1990). In the psychological context, the metaphor is understood as "derivation from, expansion to, transference of the same reality of the notion or the content to another, a brighter (Vachkov, 2004, p. 64). In psychology, metaphors were used for a long time only as empirical evidence. For example, K. Bühler (1993) proposed proverbs as the material for the introspection to test subjects. No doubt, Z. Freud's writings gave a major boost for understanding psychotherapeutic resources of metaphor. He focused on the metaphorical nature of mental images. Later, in the framework of a psychodynamic approach, the concepts of C. G. Jung appeared, which disclosed the role of magic metaphors in human life and offered psychotherapeutic technologies using metaphors. M. H. Erickson (2001) proposed and actively used the method of therapeutic metaphor in his practice. He considered that every human has the abilities which are to be respected. He helped to develop these inclinations through enabling unique internal processes of each person, rather than through some kind of fixed formulas and ingrained systems. Followers of M. H. Erickson, D. Mills and R. Crowley also used a method of therapeutic metaphor in their psychological practice, emphasizing that "just like a match lights a candle, the metaphor fuels the imagination of the child, turning it into a source of strength and self-knowledge" (2000). D. Tay addressed metaphor in psychotherapeutical practice (2013). Researchers also note the developing capabilities of metaphors that can be used to develop client's way of thinking, self-consciousness and identity. G. Shimanovich (2007) analyzes the metaphor as a cognitive nomination mechanism. V. Bogdanovich in his book "History and Metaphor to Assist the Trainer" considers the metaphor as a method of metaphorical expression of the client's problem, experience, personality for their therapeutic work (Bogdanovich, 2006). J. Gordeeva (2009) also sees the metaphor as a means of developing self-awareness of personality, both the client and a counselor. Age features of metaphorization in psychological and pedagogical work were defined by O. Stulica, N. Charlay (2019) and others.

The introduced analysis indicates the functionality of the metaphor method and a wide range in its application. Most researchers prove that the metaphorical image enables a person to see a new content in what he or she it has known for a long time,

and transfer this content beyond the area in which it arose. Implementation of this mechanism, in our opinion, can play an important role in the process of psychological work with parents of children with impaired mental and physical development, because with the help of metaphors they will be able to rethink their relationships with children non-traumatically, to reflect on the difficulties of the current life situation. On the other hand, the use of a metaphor instrument will extend the range of professional methods of qualitative impact on the “Parents – child” system in the process of implementation of psychological counselling.

Aims. The purpose of the study is to present the method of metaphor as a modern effective method that activates neurodynamic mechanisms of personality's reflection of actual life events and possibility of using various metaphor options in psychological counselling for Ukrainians with children with abnormal development, who fled from war.

Theoretical Basis. The conceptual basis of our theoretical study is the principle of reflexivity, the content of which is rethinking of the experience of individual existence and formation of the individual's beliefs based on his or her own individual experience, which combines semantic (cognitive) and emotional components. We understand reflexivity as a focus on maximum awareness of one's own actions, that is, orientation to understand the content of events occurring in personality and interpersonal contexts; as a system-forming and multifunctional personal quality, which promotes effective assimilation, deepening and transformation of social experience, switching from the external level to internal; as an ability to identify and analyze the motives of one's own actions and deeds, emotional states, impact of the activities, changing of own personality and character traits.

Compliance with the principle of reflexivity in psychological counselling requires the use of such tools and organizational forms that would be aimed at self-awareness and further on an individual's self-realization and self-determination. In this context, the use of metaphor is seen by us as a constructive and effective method of comprehension of events and actions and productive mutual understanding between children and parents on the basis of deep self-reflection as necessary and sufficient conditions for the development and efficiency of forms, means and methods of upbringing in general and interpersonal interaction in particular.

Methods. Theoretical analysis, comparison and generalization of data of scientific and methodological literature, periodicals, etc. has been conducted to examine the state of development of the defined problem. The bibliographic method, generalization of practical experience of specialists in psychological service and extrapolation of key indicators of success of metaphorization in the counselling process were used for the formulation of methodological aspects of the use of metaphors in the psychological counselling with parents of children with impaired mental and physical development.

Results and discussion.

Genesis and content of the notion of “metaphor”. The use of metaphors in social sciences and humanities (linguistics, philosophy, psychology etc.) began in the XX century, since the mid-1970s, when metaphors became an object of special study.

Metaphor manifests itself phenomenologically in all spheres of human activity, but the first sphere is still a language. It was the studies of the metaphorical language which gave rise to linguistic, philosophical and psychological research. Each of these scientific areas is interpreting the metaphor in the context of its paradigm. Thus, in philosophical studies, the metaphor acts primarily as a way of thinking; in linguistics it is seen as a mechanism of speech and a way of meaning-making. In psychological studies, the metaphor is defined as a therapeutic technique, a method, an imaginative way to describe a situation, an imaginative comparison that helps to see new meanings through the picture. In modern philosophical-linguistic literature, the term "metaphor" is used in three meanings: 1) the metaphor is an euphemism; 2) metaphor - one of the tropes, along with metonymy, synecdoche, oxymoron, etc.; 3) metaphor is any expression of language (word, phrase, sentence, text) with a figurative meaning. In this case, the metaphor can be called a proverb, idiom, parable, even a whole novel. Accordingly, it is possible to distinguish three main functions of metaphors, which are determined by the general-methodological context of its understanding. First, this is an *aesthetic function* of metaphor, which as an aesthetic phenomenon aims to evoke the positive emotions in readers. The metaphor gives expressiveness to the speech, awakens a feeling of novelty and surprise, thereby realizing the idea of beauty. Secondly, the *psychological function* of the metaphor consists in immersion of the process of perception of the world by a person into the atmosphere of psychological stability. Being formed on the basis of standard words, the metaphor contributes to an illustrative representation of information in the form of images. The metaphor "presents the non-living as alive", giving dynamics and vital meaning to an abstract concept (Alekseev, 1996, p. 73). And, thirdly, the *cognitive function* of the metaphor, primarily its clarity and sublimity. The cognitive function of the metaphor is fulfilled, first of all, in clarifying incomprehensible, allowing to avoid the verbiage in judgments, facilitates concise statements. Linking the notion with the corresponding semantic context, the metaphor clarifies its content.

Metaphors in psychological practice are messages, in which information, coming from the client to psychologist, is presented in terms belonging to other disciplines, that is, in symbolic form. Comparing previously unrelated notions, metaphors allow to reveal the essence of the message in a concise and original form, help to take a new look at the ordinary objects and phenomena that has a significant psychotherapeutic effect. Thus, despite many approaches to the interpretation of the metaphor, there is no doubt that the metaphor reflects the ability of a person to notice and create similarities between very different phenomena, individuals and classes of objects.

Neurodynamic mechanisms of metaphorical language. In our opinion, the extensive use of the metaphor method in psychological practice, is associated with the special characteristics of the human psyche, particularly with neurodynamic mechanisms for processing information in the cerebral cortex. Although sensory information is received in various forms, which are determined by the modality (quality) of perception - visual, auditory, tactile, it acquires a unified character in the process of use, processing and preservation. The metaphor is exactly the mechanism

that connects and binds the inconsistent aspects of reality best of all. Because the information presented in a sign form is transferred to a sensual form and already has not a discrete, but a continual character, which leads to a change in the initial content. The ambiguity of the symbol permits overcoming a capture of the system of meanings without losing the links with the group, based on archaic connotations that unite all members of the group. Metaphors awaken the creative resources of the imagination. Metaphoric language, as one of the universal languages of human communication and one of the most important means of art, empowers the creative potentialities of subjects in the process of joint activity.

The metaphorical language allows a specialist to convey to the client corresponding messages in a sufficiently safe form and unobtrusively suggest options for solving the problem. The possibility of a various interpretations of metaphor heard by the client determines the choice of the most acceptable solution. We can say that the metaphor works much softer and delicately than many other psychological impacts. In this case, the contents of the formulated thought gets into the core of the problem, but indirectly, vague, without pressure. Ferrari F. showed that applying a metaphor-based integrated approach in counselling offers an alternative for action in practice and increases the level of awareness for client (2020). That is why it is advisable to use metaphor in the psychological counselling of the parents of children with abnormal development, because as O. Vasilevskaya, L. Dryvichenko (2017) say, its effectiveness is quite high, when direct forms of communication are ineffective.

Methodical aspects of using metaphors in psychological counselling of parents. The use of metaphors in psychological counselling is provided by its main features: the ability to disclose one phenomenon through another; the quality of mitigation, alleviation of perception of uncomfortable traumatic information. Depending on the content of the life situation, they can perform such functions:

- *expressive* consists in expressing by client of an experience, difficult for verbalization (mood, feeling, impression), with the help of a metaphor;

- *dissociative* - when using a metaphor, there is an exteriorizing of the problem, that is, its displacement from the internal field into external one, which enables the clients to see their problem from a different angle and to find ways to solve it on their own;

- *diagnostic* - based on the fact that the images chosen by the client are determined by his or her conscious or unconscious motives. This function is widely used in projective techniques, in a transactional analysis, e.g., a favorite children's fairy tale is treated as a metaphor that helps to reveal the client's life scenario;

- *explanatory* - lies in the fact that perception and assimilation of various psychological laws and theories greatly increases due to the symbolic replacement of the abstract notions (for example, images of Ego-states in the transactional analysis or "the dog" in gestalt-therapy).

The peculiarities of the use of the metaphor in psychological work with parents of children with impaired and physical development, who fled from war in Ukraine, are the following. First, the metaphor transmits hidden meanings from one person to another. Secondly, metaphoric image allows to see a new content in what is well-

known and to transfer this content beyond the area in which it was produced. For example, even in the famous fairy tale "Kolobok" one will see a picture of a life course of the person who is forced to overcome difficulties at different stages of life; due to the fairy tale, the other will understand the idea of the need for autonomy from parents; the third one will discover in it the meaning associated with the impossibility of avoiding the fate, etc. Speaking figuratively, a metaphor is a magical treasure chamber, in which everyone finds that treasure, which he is able to find there. Thus, the metaphor may also be a means of establishing contact with Ukrainians with children with abnormal development and allows to carry out the first stage of diagnostics more precisely, to perform further correction, easily monitor the dynamics of mental processes and qualities of personality, as well as to carry out the final stage of psychological assistance and formulate recommendations. Moreover, it can be used as a diagnostic tool for a detailed study of parental-child relationships. The behavior of parents during the telling of metaphorical story, a further analysis of the drawing pattern and its plot (if drawing was organized), the specifics of the metaphor discussion – all this can provide information on the specificity of relations in the "Parents – Child" system.

Metaphors can be applied during the individual or group consultations by using such variants:

- reading and discussing metaphors (expressed in parables, cautionary tales, etc.) together with parents;
- discussion of drawings-metaphors and creating stories about them;
- work with metaphorical cards.

All metaphor versions are used to acquaint parents with and assist them in learning psychologically competent forms of effective interaction with children, to resolve difficulties in communication and develop sincere, empathic, trusting relations. They help to learn the judgment-free acceptance of their own child, understanding and spelling out kid`s feelings, resolving conflicts. For example, consider the work of a psychologist with each of the mentioned metaphor versions.

1) Parable metaphors. Reading metaphors will help to establish trust between a psychologist and parents, and may also become a starting point for discussing a particular problem of child-parental relations (both in individual consultations and during group meetings). Such a form of interaction can be supplemented by art therapeutic methods of correction (dramatization in a sandbox, drawing on a sheet of paper or on the surface of sand, modelling, etc.).

Here are two examples of parable metaphor.

Parable of understanding.

The purpose is awareness of the need to develop a closer relationship with children (perhaps, using active listening, "I"-messages).

"Once upon a time young people came to the wise man from a remote village.

– Sage, we heard that you give everyone the wise advice, show them the right way, reveal the truth. Please, help us as well! The older generation in our village has stopped to understand us, but it is very difficult for us to live with it. What should we do?

The sage looked at them and asked:

- And what language are you speaking?
- All younger generation speaks Tarabar.
- And the older inhabitants?

Young people thought and admitted:

- We did not ask them.
- That is why you could only listen to them, but not understand!”

Questions for discussion:

– How can you describe your communication with a child? Imagine some image that characterizes your communication. Remember and describe typical situation of your communication with a child.

- What helps you in communication? What stands in its way?

Metaphor "Two Little Boys".

The purpose is to help parents in awareness of the need of a judgment-free acceptance of their child, as well as the important role of parental attitudes and expectations (expressed in words and acts), in the child's personality formation, his or her self-esteem and beliefs.

“The teacher was sitting on the seashore, resting after a long excursion. He was gazing at the open, watching two six years` boys playing together. They were running, laughing, and then, having become tired, sat down together close to him and began talking:

- Who do you want to be when you grow up? I want to be a neurosurgeon.
- I don't know. I have never thought about it. You know, I'm not very smart ...

The wind blew their conversation away. And the teacher was thinking about where the second boy had found such confidence in his own limited opportunities. From a teacher? From parents? He is six years old, and if he won't change his thoughts or if someone else won't help him change his opinion, it will have a negative impact on his life, limiting confidence in his own opportunities and potential ...”

Questions for discussion:

- Close your eyes. Imagine your child and your communication with him or her. What are the words, phrases that you most often use, when talking to a child?
- How does your child react to praise and comments?

2) Metaphors-drawings. One of the versions for metaphor use in the process of individual or group counselling is the discussion of drawings and creation of a story (or a narrative) on them. Asking leading questions, encouraging the parents of the special needs kids to active discussion, the psychologist brings them to an objective understanding of the existing problem, and then to development of possible effective forms of behavior and correction of child-parental relations.

Picture-metaphor "Castle and Keys".

The purpose: to help in awareness of the need to build an individual approach to the child and educational methods.

Material: picture of a lock and a key bundle.

Instructions. Look at the pictures I have prepared for you. What's this here in

the pictures?... Right – a lock and keys. How do you describe the lock? What is it? (Possible answers: heavy, iron, closed, etc.). Yes, the lock is closed. What do you need to unlock it?... Yes, you need keys. Here is a bundle of keys. Could I unlock it by any key? Unfortunately, no. It is possible that we couldn't find the right key at this bundle. There is a key for each lock by which you can open it. What can you compare the lock and keys with? So, the lock is a child, and the keys are methods of impact on him or her, methods of upbringing, forms and techniques of interaction with him or her. In order for the child to open up to us, it is necessary to choose the only key, that is, the method of interaction. Is it possible to open the lock by another way without using the key? Yes, maybe. For example, with a hammer or an ax. But this method will necessarily break the lock. The same thing happens with a child, his or her psyche, when incorrect, barbaric methods of education and influence are used towards him or her.

Picture- metaphor "Egg and Chicken".

The purpose is to promote the awareness of the particular circumstances of the age crises (in particular, the crisis of the three years).

Material: image of an egg.

Instruction: Let's talk about how the crisis of the three years is taking place. In order to better understand it, imagine a chick, which has not yet hatched from the egg. What do you think, how it feels in an eggshell? Does it feel safe? Does it have enough nutrients? .. Yes, it is comfortable and calm, but ... despite this, at some point the chick destroys the eggshell to get outside. Why, what do you think?... (Possible answers: it can suffocate, very little space, lack of nutrients, it grows, etc.). And now let's look at our situation. Permanent care of parents for a child is the same as such a shell. The child feels comfortably, warmly and safely in it. The child needs it to a certain point. But the child grows, changes inside, and the day comes when it realizes that the shell prevents its growth. Therefore, it begins to confront the previous conditions, begins to destroy the eggshell to continue its further development, that manifests itself during the crisis of three years.

3) Metaphorical cards. In the process of parents' counseling sets of metaphorical cards with parables, wise thoughts, statements can be used as one of the effective techniques ("Alphabet of Parental Love", "Time the Wisest", "All the Faces of Harmony", "Steps to Wisdom", "Treasures of Vitality"). Parents are invited to read the statements on the proposed cards and choose one or several cards, which best suits their situation. It is needed to give them time to listen to themselves, to understand their feelings and recall the moment of difficulties in relationships with a child. Perhaps, it is necessary for them to think, what could induce a child to behave in such a way and to analyze their behavior in response. Further, a tactics of behavior is developed with the help of a psychologist that should be based on understanding of the feelings and intentions of the child and parents.

Conclusions. Genesis of the concept of "metaphor" reveals an increasing dynamics of its using in socio-psychological sciences. It has been picking up momentum since the mid-1970s, the time when metaphors became an object of special study. Phenomenologically metaphor manifests itself in all spheres of human

activity, but the first sphere is the language. The metaphorical language allows a specialist to convey relevant messages to the client in a sufficiently safe form and unobtrusively suggest options for solving the problem. Due to this, the use of metaphors in psychological counselling is starting to make sense. Depending on the content of the family life situation, metaphors can perform expressive, dissociative, diagnostic, explanatory functions. They are used during individual or group consultations using such options: first, *reading and discussing metaphors* (expressed in parables, cautionary tales, etc.) together with parents of children with impaired mental and physical development, which helps to establish an atmosphere of trust between psychologist and parents, and also becomes a starting point for discussion of a specific problem in child-parental relations. Secondly, *discussing drawings-metaphors* and creating a story based on them enables parents to realize the existing problem objectively, and then to develop possible effective forms of behavior and correction. Thirdly, *work with metaphorical cards* “Alphabet of Parental Love”, “Time the Wisest”, “All the Faces of Harmony”, “Steps to Wisdom”, “Treasures of Vitality” etc. Comprehension of the contents of the card requires from parents time on reflection, feelings and memories. At reflective rest, they can recall life situations, moments of difficulties in relationships with a child. Thus, the competent use of counselling process metaphorization could accompany the work of a psychologist until information gathering to the latest behavioral verification of the intervention.

The actualization of the problem, which was carried out by us, needs further substantiation of the metaphor use in the work of a psychologist, in particular, with persons with the peculiarities of psychophysical development and their inner circle, which will become the subject of our further research.

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