

## Metaphorical cards as innovative educational technology for students' social intelligence developing

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### Abstract

This article aims to identify the features of using metaphorical cards for the development of students' social skills studying in university. The methods of research included testing and observation methods that allow to identify the levels of formation of students' social intelligence structural components effectively; to determine the features of changes in the perception and control of their own and others' emotional and behavioral reactions, as well as the level of development of understanding of emotional expression. The study shows that the technology of using metaphorical cards is one of the leading ways of emotional-psychological, pedagogical and socio-moral influence on the development of structural components of students' social intelligence. The effectiveness of working with metaphorical cards in developing communicative skills has been shown to be due to the mechanisms involved in different forms of working with metaphor. It is considered that metaphorical cards allow projecting both negative emotional reactions arising in communication onto images, reducing the intensity of their experience, and projecting social images, acting as moral guidelines, onto real situations, using them as models of behavior. It has been found that working with this educational technology helps to develop students' skills in understanding and managing their

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feelings, emotions and experiences. Practical relevance: The data obtained in this paper can be used in the study of problems related to educational psychology, personality psychology, social psychology and pedagogy.

Keywords: educational technology, social skills, student youth.

## 1. Introduction

The increasing importance of the individual as an entity of social relations regardless of physical, mental and social characteristics goes hand in hand with the need to maintain a diversity of social connections, which requires developed communication skills, social activity and a focus on successful social integration (Kunitsina, Kazarinova & Pogolyna, 2003; Lukicheva, 2004; Potapova et al., 2018; Galiullina, 2018; Turkova, 2020; Röllke et al., 2020; Dmitrieva, Levina & Krasovskaya, 2021).

The concepts of social intelligence and social competence can be imagined as follows: as competence relates to performance, a high level of competence is hardly possible with a low level of social intelligence; however, a high level of social intelligence will not necessarily manifest itself in a performance activity (Berklund, 2007; Bashirov, 2006).

Communication skills are actions learned through meaningful repetition to receive and impart information during interpersonal interactions (Andreyanova, 2004; Myers, 1998).

Social intelligence should be seen as a separate skill of the individual, formed in the course of his or her activities in the social sphere, in the field of social interactions and communication. Social intelligence helps to understand better the meaning and type of social knowledge, social goals and objectives, and collectively leads to solutions to life's problems. People use social intelligence to solve the difficulties of social life. In addition to information about the social world, about others, about oneself, it also involves the ability to modify this information, to incorporate it into activities, to create situations and to calculate behavior (Belova, 2004; Geranyushkina, 2001; Lujbina, 2002; Kvon et al., 2018; Tolstaya, 2018; Boukhanov et al., 2019; Levina et al., 2019; Hamurcu & Canbulat, 2019; Kruger, 2019; Galchenko et al., 2020).

The issue of universal communicative qualities has long been debated in psychological science (Voiteleva, 2000; Dobrovich, 1989; Lomov, 1981; Bodalev, 2002; Dashkin, 1999; Jakobson, 1973).

In scientific literature, the terms communicative skills, communicative competencies and communicative competence are often used synonymously and the distinction between these concepts is only observed in certain contexts. Since communication skill is manifested in the process of communication, mastery of communication skills will determine its success as achieving harmony, mutual adjustment and satisfaction. Human actions, when performed repeatedly, form automatisms that do not require the identification and control of individual movements or operations when solving the same task repeatedly. This results in the formation of skills - automatically performed components of a person's conscious activity because of learning, training, exercise (Uznadze, 1977; Andreeva, 2000; Louis-Jean & Cenat, 2020).

Communication skills are defined as the ability to receive and impart information correctly and retain its meaning. Adequate interpretation and understanding of perceived material reflects a high level of communication skills' development, which accompany independent decision-making, a more positive socio-cultural profile, and understanding in dialogue, which in turn is reflected in a person's quality of life. It is also possible to talk about the relationship between the high level of communicative skills

development and the content and emotional coloring of world pictures (Andreeva, 1996; Kuzmin, 1967; Ilyinsky, 1999).

A person's broad repertoire of communicative skills provides the ability to establish and maintain social connections, which depends on the ability correctly to interpret and make sense of the flow of information, is crucial in life, as it is the basis for interaction, communication with others. Impairments in the ability to transmit, perceive and process information reduce the likelihood of successful rehabilitation for people with hearing, visual, intellectual and locomotor impairments. The degree of development of communication skills components such as communication reactions, emotional rigidity and the level of suggestibility and self-involvement form the developmental potential to determine the possible level of recovery or development of functions and social connections (Ananyev, 2000; Spivak, 2002; Izard, 2003).

Verbal communication includes the degree of emotional coloring of speech as well as the awareness and motivation of sensory data in a particular system of concepts and judgements, and since the process of communication is built under social control of rules, norms, attention should be paid to the importance of the behavioral component, which constitutes the interactive side of communication. A focus on norms and rules makes it possible to analyze one's own Actions against those of others in similar situations, thereby regulating them and avoiding complications in relationships (Fischer, 2017). This can be facilitated by art therapy, which has positive behavioral and emotional effects and provides an opportunity to develop non-verbal communication. Art therapy promotes the development of skills such as verbal and non-verbal expression of feelings, thoughts, needs through artistic expression, reduces the manifestation of negative emotional states, ensures the transition of information about negative experiences from the emotional to the cognitive level, which consists in understanding the feelings experienced (Mychko, 2002; Boyko, 1996; Yusupov, 1995; Ozdemir, 2020).

In turn, it can be argued that one of the directions of art therapy - work with metaphorical cards - is a natural form of communication and experience transfer, an organic system of educating new generations (Burno, 2006; Tszen & Pakhomov, 1999; Cherdymova et al., 2019; Kramer, 2010; Akhola & Furman, 2000; Kopytin & Svistovskaya, 2006; Lopanova et al., 2020).

The therapeutic effect of working with metaphorical cards is due to the content of most of the major problems and life situations that each person experiences in their storyline. Focusing on the impossibility of solving a problem often prevents you from finding ways to solve it by thinking about the situation more broadly, assessing it from different perspectives (Kononova, 2019; Chong et al., 2021). Common values inherent in the culture of an individual's social environment are reflected in the metaphorical cards that in turn contributes to reflecting human behavior in different contexts.

Thus, the possession of communication skills is of great importance to the individual. High levels of communication skills enable them to make sense of the information being presented and to express themselves appropriately, making communication more successful, leading to consistency and satisfaction with the outcome, eliminating misunderstandings, and reducing the barriers to communication caused by the presence of a defect. This is why developing students' communication skills is an important task, as it underpins work on overcoming communication difficulties.

## **2. The Study Objectives and Structure**

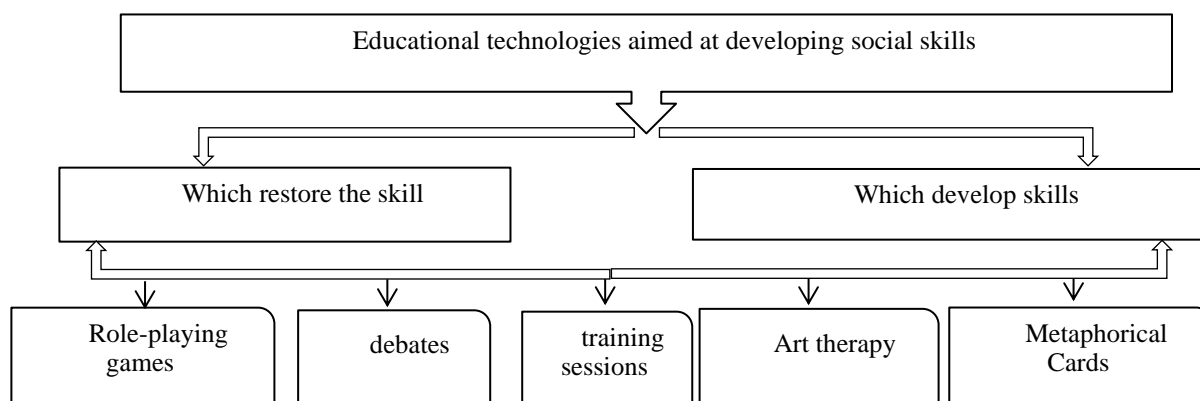
The sample group consisted of 136 students from the following Russian higher education institutions: North-Eastern Federal University named after M.K. Ammosov, MGIMO University, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Kazan State Institute of Culture, Kuban State Agrarian University named after

I.T. Trubilin. The students of these universities were represented with the age category from 18 to 21 years old, out of which 51 were boys and 84 were girls.

The study consisted of three stages, which were as follows:

- The first stage was to analyze and systematize the educational technologies, which contribute to the development of students' communicative skills. The following educational techniques were identified: behavioral training, socio-psychological training conducted in-group form, and work with metaphorical cards, art therapy and role-playing.

Among the educational technologies aimed at developing students' social skills, the following are highlighted (see Figure 1)



**Figure 1.** Educational technologies aimed at developing social skills

At this stage, findings are drawn that the inclusion of the following two components, group discussion and role-play, is mandatory in these types of educational technologies; in the process of selected educational technologies, one or more communication problems are solved and certain communication skills are practiced, e.g. collaborative activities, reflection, expression of emotions. This can be seen quite clearly in the work with the metaphor cards, which involves a systematic development of students' communication skills. The metaphorical cards reveal the qualities that need to be developed in order to overcome alienation, to change emotional attitudes towards oneself and others. The metaphor cards in the study are seen as a means of correcting social skills and developing socially approved forms of emotional response in interpersonal and group relationships;

- In the second stage of communication skills' development as a structural component of social intelligence, students were introduced to the educational environment, team building, and the creation of a trusting atmosphere in the student groups involved in the study;

- In the third stage, work was carried out using metaphorical cards to develop learning and communicative skills and to facilitate the social and professional adaptation of students.

During the research, we used different metaphorical cards (by Viktorija Kirdij) depending on the students' training profile, aims and objectives of the lesson. It is worth presenting examples of some models of metaphorical card technology (Figure 2), which were used in some classes.



**Figure 2.** Metaphor cards used for communication skills work (by V. Kirdij)

Totally over seventy metaphorical cards were used, among which students chose the three that most corresponded to their feelings about their emerging interpersonal relationships. The students then arranged the cards according to their emotional significance and a psychological and diagnostic discussion followed. The interview identified the main problems and difficulties faced by the interviewees. In the next stage, the students selected from the remaining deck of metaphorical cards those cards that from their point of view would be more desirable for them (communicatively) at a given time and role-played the constructions. The effectiveness of using metaphorical cards as a means of developing communicative skills of students in the study is associated with the following opportunities: learning how to solve problematic life situations; creating an effective communication situation in a complex emotional environment; improving the interaction with the environment; creating favorable conditions for personal self-expression; developing skills of proper interaction with people around them. One should consider the results obtained.

### **3. Particularities of Using Metaphorical Cards in Working With Young Students to Develop Social Intelligence**

The analysis of primary diagnostic's data of social intelligence's structural components revealed that for each of the indicators the students have a predominant average level of development and below the average level, which indicated an underdeveloped social intelligence. An average level is only found in such indicators as Managing Other People's Emotions, Managing one's own Emotions and Controlling Expression, indicating a higher level of development of internal understanding of emotions as compared to external appraisal. Overall, in the group, intrapersonal understanding of emotions is slightly better developed than interpersonal understanding of emotional expression, although it also demonstrates a lack of ability to understand and manage one's own emotions (3%). Only 13% of respondents were found to have a high level of development in their ability to understand others' emotions and control expression, i.e. sensitivity to the expression of emotions by others, and the ability to express their own emotions.

A dependent, aggressive and competent type of communicative behavior can characterize the development of basic communication skills. The skill of responding competently to fair criticism is developed by 30% of the students, 35% of the respondents have dependent behavior, the same number of respondents (35%) have aggressive behavior. The ability to respond to unfair criticism is developed in 13% of students, 45% react aggressively and the rest have dependent reactions. The majority of



students (45%) react aggressively to provocative behavior, and there is a predominance of aggressive behavior (31%) when asked to make a request. In situations involving the need to refuse a request, 21% reacted aggressively and 45% showed competent behavior. The need for empathy and support in 74% of the students is accompanied by a competent type of behavior, but a dependent type of behavior is detected in 23% of the subjects, and 3% of the subjects are aggressive. A similar situation was revealed in the diagnosis of the ability to accept sympathy and support from peers; 73% had the developed ability, 6% of students had an aggressive type of behavior, and 21% of the surveyed had a dependent type. The prevalence of dependent behavior can be seen in the ability to make contact with a person and to respond to another's attempt to make contact. The ability to make contact is developed in 83% of students, 3% use aggressive behavior and 14% of students exhibit dependent behavior. The ability to respond to an attempt to engage with you is developed in 81% of students, aggression in this indicator is identified in 2% of respondents, and dependent behavior is identified in 17%. The pilot study improved the communicative competence of 25% of the students.

Re-diagnosis revealed no aggressive type of communicative behavior (0%). The positive dynamics revealed by the repeated diagnostics indicate that the students respond adequately to various communicative situations, abandoning the strategy of subordination in interpersonal relations or suppression of the communication partner.

A pronounced positive change can be seen in the group's communicative behavior in relation to requesting situations. The re-diagnosis showed a competent type of response in 3% of the students.

The results of repeated diagnostics revealed a predominance of above average level in development of skills of understanding and managing feelings and experiences, a high level was demonstrated by students on the skills "Control of expression" (21%), Managing your emotions (32%), Understanding others' emotions (23%), Understanding your emotions (32%), thus it can be concluded that intrapersonal social intelligence can be better developed by using metaphorical cards. Intrapersonal social intelligence is also amenable to development, but a little weaker.

#### **4. Discussion**

By examining the social intelligence of an individual, it can be seen that social intelligence is the personality trait that determines his or her success in social interaction. Social intelligence contributes to the retention of the flow of negative emotions. This determines the behaviour of the individual. The ability to solve problems and problem situations related to actual communication and mediated social relations adequately. Social intelligence for effective communication has the following components: strong prosocial attitudes; well-developed social skills; adequate social cognition; and high emotionality.

Two types of intelligence related to social intelligence are considered: intrapersonal and interpersonal. Intrapersonal intelligence is a person's ability to understand themselves, their desires and abilities, their inner world, their reactions to external stimuli, their aspirations and motives. Interpersonal intelligence is an individual's ability to see the differences between other individuals.

Work on communication skills' development is one of the primary goals of social intelligence development, tailored to students' problems. First and foremost, the task of overcoming negative emotional reactions in students' relationships with people around them, through the creation of adequate self-estimation and a new image of themselves and a positive assessment of the world around them, can be set. Communication skills play an important role in this process in dealing with employment issues, in particular their components such as controlling emotional state, reactions to other people's behavior. Practicing ways and rules when interacting with people in different life

situations within families, and in other areas of life, is equally important. In addition, by analyzing the above-mentioned approaches, it seems possible to determine that the development of students' communication skills should be age-appropriate. The age and psychological-physiological characteristics of this group make it possible to put forward requirements for means of communicative skills development that ensure the achievement of a developmental goal: promotion of subjectivity; availability of a reference point in situations of value conflicts; promotion of assimilation of social norms and rules.

Comparing the possibilities of working with metaphorical cards as an educational technology, as well as the mechanisms of metaphorical cards' action in the development of communicative skills with the requirements for development tools when working with students, it is obvious that practices of working with metaphorical cards satisfy the highlighted requirements and their application is possible in the development of communicative skills in university students.

## 5. Conclusion

Personality formation is of a communicative nature, so lack of communication can be a serious risk factor for social maladjustment. The development and implementation of educational technologies for the development of students' communicative skills is necessary for effective use of communication means, to unlock the communicative potential of the individual and, in some cases, to correct social behavior.

Overcoming communication barriers through the development of communication skills is a prerequisite for organizing the process of social intelligence development. The organization of assistance in this area should take into account the difficulties encountered and include elements of cognitive activity and communicative skills development, where conditions are created to evaluate and understand one's own actions and behavior and to compare one's opinion with that of others.

Working with metaphorical cards can be seen as both an educational technology and a method and practice in the development of social intelligence and its building components.

Work with metaphorical cards is one of the leading methods and the way of emotional-psychological, pedagogical and socio-moral influence on the development of social intelligence in students. Moreover, it can be applied as a type of educational technology.

The effectiveness of working with metaphor cards in developing communication skills is due to the mechanisms involved in different forms of working with metaphor. Metaphorical cards allow us both to project negative emotional reactions arising from communication onto images, reducing the intensity of their experience, and to project social images as moral reference points onto real situations, using them as models of behavior. In crisis transitions, the metaphorical cards enable the activation of adaptive potential and psychological defense mechanisms, and in situations with typical communication problems, enable the discovery and activation of personal resources to solve the most common difficulties in interaction. Correlating these mechanisms, as well as the properties of the metaphor card as a developmental tool highlighted earlier, with the development of communication skills in students will determine the possibility of applying the tool in this direction.

Working with metaphorical cards allows you to lead to a conscious harmonious relationship with the world around you gently because of relating a fantasy story to real situations in your own life.

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