

*Section: PPT cases***OVERCOMING MULTILINGUAL CHALLENGES: A POSITIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY APPROACH TO SPEECH DEVELOPMENT IN A BEREAVED CHILD****Lilia Aslanyan**

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Abstract

This case study presents the therapeutic journey of a 3.5-year-old girl who experienced the sudden loss of her father and subsequently struggled with speech development. Raised in a multilingual family where Russian, Armenian, and Ukrainian were spoken, the child's linguistic landscape underwent significant shifts due to frequent relocations and familial changes. Through Positive Psychotherapy interventions, including drawing, sand play, and emotional exploration, the child gradually overcame emotional barriers and began to communicate effectively. This case highlights the importance of addressing emotional trauma in language development and demonstrates the efficacy of Peseschkian's Positive Psychotherapy in facilitating speech acquisition in children.

Keywords: child therapy, multilingualism, speech development, Positive Psychotherapy, emotional trauma

Introduction

Children growing up in multilingual environments face unique challenges in language development, particularly when navigating sudden life changes such as the loss of a parent (father), which further exacerbates their difficulties, leaving them unable to produce meaningful words despite exposure to multiple languages.

Bereavement refers to the period of mourning and grief following the death of a loved one. In young children, bereavement can manifest in various emotional and behavioral changes, including withdrawal, anxiety, and difficulties in communication.

Multilingualism is the ability to use and understand multiple languages. While being multilingual can offer cognitive and cultural benefits, it can also present challenges,

especially for young children who are still developing their linguistic and cognitive skills.

In addition to the linguistic challenges, the child has experienced deep emotional trauma (a psychological wound that injures a person excessively, preventing them from coping) due to the loss of her father and the subsequent changes in family life. These emotional stressors manifested in her speech development, presenting a complex interplay between linguistic and psychological factors. Recognizing the intricate relationship between language acquisition and emotional well-being, the therapeutic intervention employed a holistic approach grounded in Positive Psychotherapy principles.

By addressing the child's emotional needs while nurturing her linguistic abilities, the therapeutic process aimed to foster resilience and facilitate communication skills. Drawing on

Peseschkian's Positive Psychotherapy framework, the intervention prioritized the establishment of trust and rapport, creating a safe space for the child to explore her emotions and express herself verbally. Through interactive activities such as drawing, sand play, and games, the therapist endeavored to bridge the gap between emotional healing and linguistic development.

Case

Client description: A 3.5-year-old girl K., the only child of the family, residing with her mother following the sudden death of her father. Raised in a multilingual environment, the child struggled with speech development and failed to articulate meaningful words in any language.

Case history: The child's speech development was hindered by frequent relocations and exposure to different languages, including Russian, Armenian, and Ukrainian. At 1.5 years old, she experienced a significant shift when her mother took her to Armenia, where she was immersed in Armenian-speaking surroundings. Despite attempts to acclimate the child to various languages, she remained unable to communicate effectively. Subsequent relocations and the loss of her father further exacerbated her speech difficulties, leading to emotional distress and communication challenges.

This case study is based on Positive Psychotherapy, which emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing emotional issues in how children learn to express themselves through language, especially when growing up in a multilingual environment. To offer a comprehensive picture, a range of research papers have been studied. It is well documented that emotional stress in childhood can greatly affect how children manage their feelings, develop mentally, and learn to use language (Siegel, 2001). Emotional problems can significantly affect a child's ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively (Mendez & Lyster, 2014). The child in our study faced unique barriers to language learning due to a multilingual environment (De Houwer, 2009; Altarriba & Heredia, 2008), which contributed to a delay in the child's language development. It became evident that specialized approaches were necessary in these situations (Mendez & Lyster, 2014).

Methodology

The therapeutic process was structured to incorporate various techniques aimed at promoting emotional healing and linguistic development within a multilingual context.

Therapeutic Techniques Employed

Positive Psychotherapy emphasizes a holistic approach to therapy, focusing on the strengths and resources of individuals to foster healing and growth. The PPT intervention for this child included several key elements. The selection of therapeutic techniques was based on their ability to address the specific challenges faced by the child. Drawing and sand play were chosen to facilitate non-verbal communication and emotional expression, allowing the child to express her feelings safely and creatively. Interactive games were incorporated to stimulate language use and improve verbal skills naturally and enjoyably. These activities were selected to reduce the pressure associated with speaking and to encourage the child to engage actively in the therapeutic process.

Therapeutic Environment

The therapy sessions were conducted in a controlled environment where the therapist created a warm and trusting atmosphere to make the child feel secure and supported. This setting was crucial for encouraging the child to engage with the therapeutic process and to start using language as part of her emotional expression.

Structure of Sessions

Each therapy session was structured to last between 45 to 50 minutes. This regular schedule ensured consistency and allowed for gradual progress to be observed over time. The duration of the therapy was determined based on the child's needs and progress, with the therapy continuing for a total of 13 sessions. The sessions were carefully planned to include a mix of different interventions tailored to the child's needs. The structure of a typical session included the following elements:

Warm-up (5-10 minutes):

- The session would begin with a brief warm-up activity to help the child settle in and feel comfortable. This could include simple games, drawing, or discussing something pleasant from her week.

Core therapeutic activities (30-35 minutes):

- Drawing and sand play: The child was encouraged to engage in creative activities such as drawing and playing with sand. These activities served as non-verbal outlets for her emotions, helping her to express her internal world.
- Interactive games: The therapist incorporated games that required verbal interaction, promoting language use in a fun and pressure-free manner.
- Emotional exploration: The therapist guided the child through activities and conversations that helped her articulate her feelings and experiences. This included discussing her drawings or sand play creations, which provided insights into her emotional state.
- Cognitive strategies: The therapist introduced simple cognitive exercises to help the child reframe her thoughts and perceptions about language and emotional expression. This involved challenging negative self-talk and encouraging adaptive thinking patterns.

Reflection (3-5 minutes):

- The therapist used simple language and gentle encouragement to help the child reflect on the activities. This might include asking the child to point out their favorite part of the session or to show their drawings and describe them. The therapist provided positive reinforcement by acknowledging the child's efforts and achievements with praise and stickers or small rewards. This fostered a sense of accomplishment and motivation in the child.

Evaluation of Progress

One of the primary goals of Positive Psychotherapy is to establish a trusting and supportive therapeutic relationship. In this case, the therapist focused on creating a warm and safe environment for the child. By engaging in activities such as drawing and sand play, the therapist allowed the child to express her emotions nonverbally, which helped in building trust. As the child began to feel more comfortable, she started to open up and participate more actively in the sessions.

Positive Psychotherapy emphasizes the importance of expressing emotions in a healthy and constructive manner. Through drawing and sand play, the child was able to externalize her feelings of loss, confusion, and frustration. These activities served as a medium for the child to

communicate her inner world without the pressure of verbal articulation. Over time, this helped in reducing her emotional burden and provided a foundation for further emotional exploration. This not only improved her linguistic abilities but also enhanced her social skills and confidence in verbal communication.

The therapist guided the child through conversations that helped her articulate her feelings and experiences. This process of emotional exploration is central to Positive Psychotherapy, as it allows the individual to gain insights into their emotions.

Through the therapeutic process, the child learned to identify and express her emotions more constructively. This led to improved emotional regulation, as evidenced by a decrease in emotional outbursts and meltdowns. The child developed coping mechanisms that allowed her to handle stress and adapt to her environment more effectively.

The therapy sessions also facilitated better communication and a stronger bond between the child and her mother. As the child's ability to express herself improved, so did her interactions with her mother. This enhanced mutual understanding and support, contributing to the child's overall sense of emotional security and well-being.

The holistic approach of Positive Psychotherapy, which integrates emotional healing with skill development, proved effective in addressing the child's speech difficulties. The child gradually started producing more intelligible speech, expanding her vocabulary, and engaging in verbal exchanges. The progress in her language skills was a direct result of the reduction in emotional barriers and the supportive therapeutic environment.

The child's progress was monitored through observation techniques and also through feedback from the child's mother. Improvements in verbal communication and emotional expression were documented in each session, providing insights into the effectiveness of the interventions used.

Description of work

Positive Psychotherapy interventions focused on establishing trust and rapport with the child while addressing underlying emotional trauma. Therapeutic techniques included drawing, sand play, and interactive games to facilitate emotional expression and communication. The therapist provided a nurturing environment

where the child felt safe to explore her feelings and gradually develop verbal communication skills.

Body: The therapeutic intervention focused on engaging the child's body through interactive activities such as drawing, sand play, and games. These kinesthetic experiences provided a tangible outlet for the child to express her emotions and communicate non-verbally. By incorporating movement and sensory experiences, the therapist aimed to promote emotional regulation and body awareness in the child.

Performance: The therapeutic process encourages the child to take active steps toward emotional healing and linguistic development. Through guided play and exploration, the child was encouraged to experiment with different forms of expression and communication. By actively engaging in the therapeutic activities, the child gained a sense of agency and empowerment, fostering a positive sense of self-efficacy and resilience.

Contact: Cognitive strategies were employed to help the child reframe her thoughts and perceptions about language and emotional expression. The therapist encouraged the child to challenge negative self-talk and replace it with more adaptive and constructive thinking patterns. By promoting cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills, the child developed a more positive mindset towards her linguistic abilities and emotional experiences. Additionally, the therapy sessions facilitated improved communication and positive contact between the child and her mother. As the child's ability to express her emotions and needs grew, so did her connection with her mother, leading to enhanced mutual understanding and support. This improved relationship further contributed to the child's emotional security and encouraged her ongoing language development.

Sense: Imaginative play and storytelling were utilized to tap into the child's creativity and imagination. Through fantasy-based interventions, the therapist created a symbolic space where the child could explore her inner world and express her deepest thoughts and feelings. By engaging in imaginative play, the child gained a sense of mastery over her emotions and developed new ways of coping with stress and uncertainty.

Actual outcome

Through ongoing therapy sessions, the child made significant progress in both her emotional well-being and communication skills. As the therapeutic process unfolded, the child began to express herself more confidently, gradually overcoming the initial barriers to verbal communication. While initially hesitant and withdrawn, the child's demeanor gradually shifted, displaying increased engagement and openness during therapy sessions.

One notable outcome of the therapeutic intervention was the improvement in communication between the child and her mother. As the child gains confidence in expressing her thoughts and feelings, the bond between mother and daughter is strengthened, fostering a deeper sense of connection and understanding between them. The mother reported noticing positive changes in her daughter's behavior, observing greater responsiveness and receptiveness to verbal and non-verbal cues.

In addition to improvements in communication, the child displayed enhanced emotional regulation and coping skills. Through the therapeutic activities, she learned to identify and express her emotions constructively, reducing instances of emotional outbursts and meltdowns. The child demonstrated increased resilience in the face of challenges, displaying a greater capacity to adapt and cope with stressors in her environment.

Furthermore, the child's linguistic development showed promising signs of improvement. While she initially struggled to articulate meaningful words, the child began to produce more intelligible speech throughout therapy. She displayed a growing vocabulary and a willingness to engage in verbal exchanges, indicating progress in her language acquisition skills.

Discussion

The use of both subjective and objective metrics in monitoring the child's development allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the therapeutic intervention's effectiveness. The combination of these metrics not only allowed for a more holistic assessment of the child's progress but also highlighted the importance of integrating multiple assessment tools in child therapy. The case underscores the significance of addressing emotional trauma in language

development, particularly in multilingual contexts. Positive Psychotherapy interventions proved effective in promoting speech acquisition and emotional resilience in the child. By addressing underlying emotional barriers, therapists can facilitate holistic development and well-being in young clients.

Conclusions

This case highlights the importance of integrating emotional support into language therapy interventions, particularly in cases involving trauma and multilingualism. Positive Psychotherapy offers valuable strategies for addressing emotional barriers and promoting speech development in children. By integrating Positive Psychotherapy principles, such as building a strong therapeutic alliance, focusing on the client's strengths, and utilizing creative techniques, the therapist was able to address the child's emotional and linguistic challenges simultaneously. The child showed significant improvement in her ability to express emotions, regulate her behavior, and communicate verbally.

The child's progress was assessed through therapist observations and the mother's feedback. Objective metrics, including standardized language assessments, emotional regulation scales, and behavioral observations, were also employed to quantify the child's development more objectively. These subjective and objective measures provided valuable insights into the child's emotional and behavioral changes over the course of therapy.

Overall, the therapeutic intervention yielded positive outcomes for the child, enhancing her emotional well-being, communication abilities, and adaptive coping strategies. The improvements observed in both the child's behavior and her relationship with her mother underscore the efficacy of Positive Psychotherapy in addressing the complex interplay between emotional trauma, language development, and interpersonal relationships in young children.

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