

DIDACTIC POTENTIAL OF CLINICAL SPEECH-THERAPY SITUATIONS IN INDEPENDENT LEARNING OF FUTURE SPEECH THERAPISTS

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Abstract

The professional preparation of future speech therapists requires not only the acquisition of theoretical knowledge but also the ability to analyze complex clinical and pedagogical situations, identify relevant diagnostic information, formulate professional hypotheses, select appropriate assessment procedures, design intervention strategies, and evaluate expected outcomes. In this context, clinical speech-therapy situations represent an important didactic resource for organizing students' independent learning. This article examines the didactic potential of clinical speech-therapy situations in developing the professional competence of future speech therapists. The study employs theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, systematization, synthesis, generalization, and pedagogical modeling. Clinical speech-therapy situations are interpreted as professionally oriented educational tasks that reproduce essential characteristics of authentic speech-language pathology cases and require students to make evidence-informed professional decisions.

Keywords: Speech therapy, future speech therapists, independent learning, clinical speech-therapy situation, case-based learning, clinical reasoning, professional competence, diagnostic competence, intervention planning, reflective learning.

Introduction

The growing complexity of contemporary speech-language intervention places new demands on the professional education of future speech therapists. A qualified specialist is expected not only to possess theoretical knowledge about speech, language, communication, voice, fluency, and related developmental disorders but also to apply this knowledge appropriately in individual clinical and educational situations.

This distinction between possessing knowledge and using knowledge is particularly important in professional education.

A student may successfully reproduce definitions, classifications, symptoms, and intervention methods during an examination but still experience difficulties when required to determine which information is relevant in a specific case, distinguish similar manifestations, select appropriate assessment procedures, formulate intervention objectives, or justify a professional decision.

Therefore:

knowing a method $\neq$ being able to select and justify the method in a specific professional situation.

This gap between theoretical preparation and professional decision-making increases the importance of practice-oriented learning technologies.

Independent learning has considerable potential in this respect. However, its effectiveness depends on the nature of the tasks assigned to students. If independent learning consists mainly of summarizing literature, memorizing definitions, preparing presentations, or reproducing lecture materials, it may increase the volume of acquired information without sufficiently developing professional reasoning.

Clinical speech-therapy situations provide an alternative approach.

A clinical speech-therapy situation may be defined as a professionally oriented educational problem that presents information about a real or simulated client with communication difficulties and requires the student to analyze data, identify the central problem, formulate a hypothesis, determine further assessment needs, select an intervention strategy, and justify professional decisions.

Such situations can include information about speech and language characteristics, developmental history, communication behavior, family observations, educational performance, emotional responses, assessment findings, and contextual factors.

The educational value of the clinical situation is therefore not contained merely in the case description. Its didactic value emerges from the intellectual and professional actions the student must perform.

The main purpose of this study is to theoretically substantiate the didactic potential of clinical speech-therapy situations in the independent learning of future speech therapists and to develop a methodological sequence for their systematic application.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is theoretical and analytical in nature. Its methodological framework integrates competency-based, activity-oriented, problem-based, case-based, reflective, and professionally contextualized approaches to higher education.

Scientific literature related to speech-language pathology education, clinical reasoning, case-based learning, problem-based learning, simulation, professional competence, and independent learning was analyzed.

The following methods were employed:

theoretical analysis — to identify conceptual foundations of professionally oriented independent learning;

comparative analysis — to compare reproductive and clinical-situational learning tasks;

systematization — to classify the didactic functions of clinical speech-therapy situations;

generalization — to identify common principles for their application;

pedagogical modeling — to construct a methodological sequence for developing professional reasoning through clinical situations.

The central analytical relationship was formulated as:

theoretical knowledge → clinical information → analysis → professional decision → justification → reflection.

DISCUSSION

The analysis indicates that the didactic value of clinical speech-therapy situations is determined not by the case itself but by the cognitive and professional actions required from the student.

If a clinical case merely asks the student to identify a diagnosis from obvious symptoms, its educational potential remains limited. A professionally meaningful case should require analysis of uncertainty, comparison of alternatives, identification of missing information, and justification of decisions.

This reveals an important distinction between case description and case-based professional learning.

A second important issue concerns the balance between pedagogical structure and student independence. Students with insufficient clinical experience may be unable to

analyze highly complex open cases without support. Conversely, excessive prompts may convert the task into a mechanical algorithm.

Therefore, the degree of pedagogical support should decrease as competence develops. A third issue concerns assessment. If students receive grades only for reaching the “correct diagnosis,” important aspects of clinical reasoning remain invisible. Assessment should also consider the quality of information analysis, hypothesis formulation, justification, intervention planning, evidence use, and reflection.

A possible assessment formula is: professional performance = accuracy of analysis + logic of hypothesis + validity of decision + methodological justification + evidence use + reflection.

Finally, clinical situations are especially appropriate for independent learning because they create a meaningful need for students to search for information. Instead of receiving all necessary knowledge from the teacher, students encounter a professional problem that reveals what they still need to learn.

Independent learning therefore changes from: teacher assignment → information reproduction

to:

professional problem → knowledge need → independent inquiry → evidence analysis → professional decision → reflection.

CONCLUSION

Clinical speech-therapy situations represent an important didactic resource for improving the independent professional preparation of future speech therapists. Their systematic application enables independent learning to move beyond reproductive academic tasks toward analytical, problem-based, evidence-informed, and professionally contextualized activity.

The study identified motivational, cognitive-integrative, diagnostic-analytical, problem-solving, projective-methodological, evidence-informed, and reflective functions of clinical speech-therapy situations.

The proposed methodological sequence — clinical information → problem identification → analysis → professional hypothesis → diagnostic decision → intervention planning → justification → reflection — creates conditions for integrating theoretical knowledge with professional action.

The effectiveness of this approach depends on the progressive complexity of cases and the gradual reduction of pedagogical support. Consequently, students should develop from completing structured analytical tasks toward independently solving open clinical problems.

The principal didactic result of clinical speech-therapy situations can therefore be expressed as a transition from:

“I know the theoretical material” → “I can analyze a clinical situation” → “I can formulate a professional hypothesis” → “I can make a decision” → “I can justify my decision” → “I can critically evaluate and revise my professional action.”

Thus, the systematic integration of clinical speech-therapy situations into independent learning can contribute to the development of diagnostic reasoning, intervention planning, evidence-informed practice, reflective competence, and professional autonomy among future speech therapists.

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