

Naturalistic approaches to language intervention: The case of educational programs of the Casts museum, Department of History and Archaeology AUTH

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Naturalistic approaches to educational intervention aim at providing educational training in real everyday-life conditions and by so doing to promote children's linguistic and communication abilities. In this study we report on the development of educational scenarios promoting the expressive and receptive linguistic abilities of children and teenagers with mental retardation in the context of a real museum environment.

Our research team, specializing in classical archeology, linguistics, psychology and special education, develops educational scenarios for people with mental retardation at the Casts Museum of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH).

MAIN AIM AND OBJECTIVES :

- To enhance, expressive and receptive linguistic abilities;
- To promote familiarization with high aesthetic classical sculpture and its various connotations and symbolisms;
- To contribute to cognitive and social emotional development;

METHOD

- Performed in situ: relevant vocabulary is presented in front of some of the most representative sculptures of ancient Greek and Roman art.
- Supported by techniques such as visual observation, dramatization, role playing, drawing, educational material.

PARTICIPANTS: The program, which is currently being developed, was implemented experimentally at AUTH on Sunday (06/05/2018) with the participation of 7 children aged 8-15 (divided into three groups) and a group of 8 adults (aged 18-56).

MATERIAL: educational scenarios were adapted to the age of the individuals: Group A (children aged 6-18) and Group B (adults) with mild or moderate mental retardation.



RESULTS. Two of our case studies

Σ.Κ., 8-year-old girl. Diagnosis: "Lack of concentration and hyperactivity at school, possible mental retardation". During the program her commitment to her performance as a statue (kouros) was impressive: she easily employed the vocabulary presented, part of which she used in her story about the figure she made on clay. The exercise on the grid has shown her ability to draw accurately.

Z. M., 18-year-old boy. Diagnosis: "Mental retardation". In the role play: his insistence to incarnate Karakalas, whose portrait he chose from a large set of portraits of ancient Greek and Roman political men, was impressive. The portrait of this military emperor, whose facial features are rendered in a hard and rigid way, is distinguished by the extraordinary dynamism he exudes. While acting out his role, he spontaneously raised his voice.

ACADEMIC AND TEACHING IMPACT

The materials employed for this project can additionally be used as educational materials for students with other disabilities. Moreover this project can function as a springboard for further research into museum education for individuals with special educational needs.

EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS

Group A



Verbal rendering of concepts related to three-dimensional, inert or moving figures. Participants are invited to impersonate the archaic **Kouros** copying their strict frontal posture (*anatomy and morphology of the human body*).

Then the children imitate gods depicted in aggressive mode: eg. the **Zeus of Artemision**, become "ancient heroes" and in response to a series of questions express the source of the latter's power verbally (awareness of the role of the body).



Group B

Designed to enhance the ability to integrate socially: Role play takes place between the **Kouros of Sounion** (3.05 m high) and the figures from the reliefs on the **Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki**. The adults express the emotions they feel for the lonely "giant" (*conception of individual experience*) and for the soldiers surrounding their emperor in the triumph scene (group experience); or how soldiers interact (*social structure*) with the figure of the emperor (*loneliness, isolation, coexistence, cohabitation, sociality, integration*).