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Department of psychology and speech therapy

Module : ENGLISH

Topic :

**Alternative and Complementary Modalities
of Speech Therapy: Music Therapy**

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Introduction

In health care, people use more and more alternative and complementary therapies. These methods help traditional treatments and give new ways to communicate and heal.

In speech therapy, they can help patients express themselves and improve their speech.

One of these methods is music therapy. It uses music, sound, and rhythm to help people feel better, think better, and speak better. It can also make patients more relaxed and happy.

1- Definition of alternative and complementary therapies:

Alternative and complementary therapies are treatments that are different from normal medicine.

They can be used with regular medicine or instead of it. Their goal is to help the whole person — body, mind, and emotions — to heal naturally and feel better in daily life.

2- Definition of music therapy:

Music therapy is a way to help people using music and sound. The therapist and the patient work together with songs, rhythm, or instruments.

Music therapy can help people communicate, remember things, control emotions, and improve speech and attention. In speech therapy, it is used to make communication and expression easier.

3- The Link between Speech Therapy and Music Therapy:

Speech-language therapy (orthophonie) and music therapy are closely connected because both aim to improve communication skills, but they use different methods. Speech-language therapy focuses on assessing and treating speech, language, and voice disorders through structured linguistic and motor exercises, while music therapy uses musical elements such as rhythm, melody, singing, and improvisation to stimulate similar brain areas involved in speech and language. Research has shown that music and language share overlapping neural networks, especially in the auditory and motor regions of the brain. Therefore, combining music therapy with speech-language therapy can help improve prosody, articulation, fluency, and even motivation to communicate. For example, music-based interventions have been found to enhance speech production and social communication in children with developmental language delays and adults with aphasia after a stroke.

4- Origins and Historical Evaluation of Music Therapy:

Music therapy is an ancient practice that uses music for therapeutic purposes. Since Antiquity, philosophers such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle viewed music as a source of harmony capable of healing both the body and the mind. During the Middle Ages, it was mainly used in religious chants to calm the soul, and during the Renaissance, scholars began studying its effects on emotions and the human body. In the 18th and 19th centuries, music started being used in psychiatric hospitals, notably by Esquirol in France, to soothe mental disorders. After World War II, music therapy became a scientific and clinical discipline, when doctors observed that music helped injured soldiers recover speech, reduce pain, and improve emotional well-being. In 1944, the first university program in music therapy was established in the United States, and the practice then spread across Europe. In France, it developed during the 1970s–1980s with pioneers such as Édith Lecourt and the creation of the French Society of Music Therapy. Today, music therapy is recognized as a complementary therapeutic approach used by speech-language pathologists (orthophonists) to stimulate language, memory, and emotions in patients with aphasia, autism, or cognitive disorders, by harnessing the power of rhythm, melody, and singing.

5- Approaches and Methods of Music Therapy in Speech Therapy:

Music therapy is divided into several approaches depending on the therapeutic goals and the patient's needs. Here are the three main forms used in speech therapy: active, receptive, and mixed.

- **Active Music Therapy :**Active music therapy involves engaging the patient in musical creation through the voice, instruments, or the body. It promotes expression, communication, and creativity through activities such as improvisation, singing, or rhythmic games. In speech therapy, it helps work on breathing, prosody, orofacial motor skills, and expressive language, especially in children with communication disorders. It also stimulates motivation, self-confidence, and interaction with others.
- **Receptive Music Therapy :**In receptive music therapy, the patient listens to recorded or live music while being attentive to their emotions and sensations. This guided listening helps with relaxation, emotional exploration, and sensory stimulation. In speech therapy, it can be used to promote language recovery, such as in aphasic patients after a stroke, by reactivating auditory memory and verbal production through listening to familiar songs.
- **Mixed Music Therapy :**Mixed music therapy combines both approaches — active and receptive — to use their complementary effects. The patient often begins by listening to music (receptive phase) to awaken emotions, then expresses themselves through singing or instruments (active phase). This method improves communication, memory, concentration, and emotional regulation, while strengthening the therapeutic bond. It is particularly useful for autistic children or aphasic individuals to stimulate communication and language.

6- Applications of music therapy in speech therapy:

A) In children (for example with autism or dysphasia) :

For children with autism, music therapy helps them to communicate and interact.

The rhythm and repetition of songs can help them to say words, make eye contact, and express emotions.

Example :

- ✓ Hello songs : The therapist starts every session with a “Hello Song” where the child says or sings their name — it helps build routine and social interaction.
- ✓ Instrument imitation games : The therapist plays a simple rhythm on a drum or tambourine, and the child tries to imitate it — this improves attention and turn-taking.
- ✓ Emotion songs : Songs about feelings (“happy,” “sad,” “angry”) help the child recognize and express emotions.
- ✓ Musical dialogue : The therapist and child “talk” with instruments — one plays a rhythm, the other answers. It encourages social reciprocity.
- ✓ **Objective** : Encourage eye contact, shared attention, and verbal imitation — essential for language development

For children with dysphasia, singing and rhythm exercises can help improve pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

- **Singing short sentences** : The therapist turns phrases into songs, e.g., “I want water” sung slowly to a melody, helping articulation and word recall.
 - **Rhythm tapping** : The child taps the rhythm of words or syllables while speaking — this helps with fluency and speech timing.
 - **Fill-in-the-blank songs** : The therapist sings a song but stops before the last word, and the child completes it. Example : “Twinkle, twinkle, little...” → “star !
Song-based repetition : Repetition through music helps memory and grammar.
- Objective** : Strengthen speech rhythm, phonological awareness, and sentence structure through fun repetition.

b) In adults (for example after a stroke or with stuttering) :

In adults who have had a stroke, music therapy can help recover speech.

One well-known method is Melodic Intonation Therapy, where patients sing short sentences before saying them.

Examples of techniques :

Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT) : Patients sing phrases like “Good morning” or “How are you ?” using melody and rhythm before saying them normally.

- ✓ Singing familiar songs : Helps stimulate automatic speech (lyrics already stored in memory).
- ✓ Rhythmic speech exercises : Using clapping or tapping to mark syllables can help control speech rate.

- ✓ **Songwriting** : Some therapists let patients create short songs about their feelings — it boosts motivation and confidence.

Objective : Reconnect speech and melody to restore language fluency, intonation, and confidence in communication.

For people who stutter, music and rhythm can help them speak more fluently, relax, and control their breathing.

Example:

The therapist may use background music, rhythmic speech, or singing exercises to make speech smoother and reduce anxiety.

- ✓ **Singing phrases** : Singing familiar lyrics smoothly, then transforming them into spoken rhythm (“Hello — He-llo — Hello”).
- ✓ **Breathing with rhythm** : Inhale on a count of 3, exhale while saying a word to the beat of soft music — helps regulate airflow.
- ✓ **Group singing** : Reduces stress and increases self-confidence through shared vocal activity.

Objective : Develop fluency, breath control, and self-confidence in communication.

Examples of disorders treated with music therapy :

Music therapy can be used to help people with many different types of disorders.

Here are some of the main ones shown in this picture

1. Neurological disorders:

Music therapy is very helpful for people with neurological problems, such as stroke, Parkinson’s disease, or brain injury. The rhythm and melody can help the brain reorganize language and motor functions.

For example, after a stroke, singing can help a person recover speech or move more easily.

2. Physical disorders:

For people with physical disabilities or motor problems, music helps coordinate movement and improve balance. The therapist can use rhythm to help the person walk or move to the beat.

Example : Clapping, drumming, or dancing can make rehabilitation exercises more fun and effective.

3. Sensory disorders:

Music therapy is also used for sensory problems, such as hearing or visual impairments. The vibration and rhythm of music can help people perceive sensations differently and develop new communication channels.

Example : A child with a visual impairment can use sound games to improve attention and spatial awareness.

4. Behavioral difficulties:

Music helps people with behavioral disorders to express emotions and reduce anxiety or aggression.

Example : A child with hyperactivity can calm down through rhythmic drumming or soft singing activities.

5. Social difficulties:

Music therapy encourages interaction and cooperation.

Group music sessions help people listen to others, share, and communicate.

Example : Children with autism can learn to take turns or play together during musical games.

6. Psycho-affective disorders

Music therapy supports people with emotional or psychological problems, such as depression or anxiety.

Music helps them express feelings, relax, and improve self-esteem.

Example : Listening to or creating music can help patients talk about their emotions in a safe and creative way.

7- Therapeutic objectives :

The objective of music therapy is to use music as a structured, research-supported medium to achieve diverse therapeutic goals across several areas including speech and communication, motor skills, cognitive function, behavior, social skills, emotional expression, and sensory processing. In speech therapy specifically, music therapy aims to enhance communication by improving speech fluency, articulation, auditory processing, and expressive language through engaging and motivating musical interventions. Music is not the goal itself but the method used to help individuals reach traditional therapy goals more efficiently and enjoyably.

For example, adults with speech impairments after brain injury may benefit from Melodic Intonation Therapy, which utilizes melody and singing to reactivate speech skills in damaged brain areas. For children, music therapy supports language development, problem-solving, social interaction, and speech production.

Behavioral :

Music is used as a therapeutic tool to soothe behavioral disorders such as agitation or anxiety. It also promotes the expression of emotions and provides pleasure through singing and listening.

At the motor level :

music therapy helps to awaken the body, strengthen tone, increase vocal production and control hypophonia .

Cognitive level :

This type of therapy helps stimulate episodic sensory memory as well as attention and language.

At the bodily level :

it aims to promote a feeling of general well-being by encouraging relaxation, encouraging vestibular movement (linked to our sense of balance) and helping to combat pain.

Overall, the objective is to facilitate functional communication, enhance motor and cognitive skills, support emotional regulation, and improve social and sensory integration, using music as a therapeutic medium tailored to individual client needs. Progress is tracked with measurable goals and objectives to ensure effective outcomes in therapy

8-Methodological and Practical Limitations

Even if music therapy is very useful in speech therapy, it also has some limits.

1. Methodological limits

There are no fixed rules or standard methods for music therapy.

Few scientific studies clearly prove its effectiveness.

The results change from one person to another, depending on the disorder or the therapist.

It is sometimes difficult to measure progress caused only by music therapy.

2. Practical limits

Not all speech therapists are trained in music therapy.

It can take more time and need special materials like instruments or a quiet room.

Some patients, especially children with autism, can be sensitive to noise and may not enjoy it.

It can also be expensive if a professional music therapist is required.

Conclusion:

To conclude, music therapy is a good complementary tool in speech therapy.

It helps patients express emotions, improve rhythm, and develop communication.

But it has some limits and needs more research and training to be better used.

So, we can say that music therapy does not replace speech therapy, but it works very well with it to help patients progress.

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