

## Individual's interpretation: evaluation criteria



**M. V. Suryakova**

*Candidate of psychological sciences, associate professor  
Department of Engineering Pedagogics  
National Metallurgical Academy of Ukraine  
Dnipro, Ukraine*

### Abstract

The article reports on the results of the empirical research carried out with the individuals at the early adulthood age with the objective to study the interpretative qualitative characteristics. In the course of the research, we identify the actions, in which the interpretative activities are performed. The level of adequate understanding is analyzed with the material under interpretation and the level of observation is also determined. The relation between the material understanding and the context identification is revealed. The research shows that the respondents possess an insufficient level of the skills to express their opinions and to reflect the ideas of the others. The parameters of reflexivity and those of awareness are regarded as the characteristics of the individual's interpretative activity, the connection between these characteristics is also analyzed.

Key words: INTERPRETATION, INTERPRETATIVE ACTIVITY, INTERPRETATIVE ACTIONS, REFLEXIVITY.

In the field of the contemporary psychology, scientific researchers have turned their attention to the various aspects of the psychological interpretation. In particular, the psychological conception of inter-

pretation is regarded as related to the existence of the necessity for the individual to carry out the interpretative activity and the engagement in this activity identifies the individual as the subject of this activity.

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During the own lifetime, the individual has to conduct the interpretative activity and to make solutions of the certain interpretative problem and therefore to perform interpretation [6]. It is also worth to be mentioned that the interpretation within the science of psychology is determined as the personal explanation on the reality with its complex embracing social processes, events, structures, deeds, relationships between people and the own life. Obviously, the individual is not able to interpret a phenomenon, other individual or himself/herself for once only and to keep to this interpretation forever. The necessity to carry out the interpretation constantly is evoked by the features of the reality, in which the individual exists, by its dynamic character, changeability, and inconsistency. These conditions require the individual's interpretative activity to appear as well as the establishment, reviewing and specifying the own correlation with this reality, understanding and rethinking on the attitudes to the reality and elaborating the own attitude to it. The comprehensive goal of the individual's interpretative activity is the possession of the own attitude, which ensures the confidence via certainty.

The interpretation could be carried out in the specific activities, for example, in musical activities, artistic performance, perception of oeuvres, juridical and pedagogical practices, psychological and psychotherapeutic consulting, etc. The interpretative activity, in this case, is encouraged by the professional activity of the individual while the interpretation itself is the self-sufficient aim of this activity. However, the interpretation takes place in the other aspects of the human's life and mainly performs the regulating function. The individual is primarily the subject of the own life, the interpretation of which he/she ought to conduct [8]. For the psychology, the interpretation subject is considered as the subject of the consciousness, activity, and communication. These are the vectors that determine the context of the individual's interpretation and understanding. The individual's interpretative activity in everyday life requires the psychological research as its quality gives self-efficiency and confidence to the individual. In the current study, the individual's interpretative activity is regarded as an everyday life practice, which is activated in compliance with the requirements of the tasks to interpret.

### **Analysis on the resent publications**

The contemporary science studies the interpretative activity within the specific field and as the activity on the oeuvres interpretation (H.L. Achkasova, M. Yu. Borshchevska, Vol. V. Dzhodzhuva, V.A. Domanskyi, M.H. Dorofeieva, I.B. Kostina, L.V. Nurhalieieva, V.H. Marantsman, O.V. Milovanova, V.O. Mo-

liako, N.M. Svirina, L.V. Shamrei, I.L. Sholpo, M.S. Shyriak and others) and the interpretaion of musical performance (O.O. Apraksyna, O.A. Bodina, M.Sh. Bonfeld, A.Yu. Vyshyna, M.D. Kornaukhov, I.I. Zemtovskyi, N.M. Hryshanovych, O.K. Ylyna, L.S. Maikovska and others).

The particular aspects of the interpretation have been studied in the course of the educational activity of the individual (L.Ye. Ahapova, O.D. Bozhovych, I.S. Zahurska, M.M. Ivanov, L.Yu. Kondrashova, N.V. Chepelieva, V.I. Shuliar, O.R. Yadrovskaya and others). There also have been researches on the interpretation actions for the interpreting non-verbal behavior (O.Ya. Brodetskyi, V.O. Labunska, O.O. Puhachevskyi, H.V. Sierikov, O.V. Chebuchieva and others).

However, there is also the need to explore the interpretative activity as the issue, with which the individual deals every day, and to define its qualitative characteristics.

*This article aims at* reporting the research results on the qualitative characteristics of the interpretative activity and defining the development level of several of its components.

### **The empirical research and its results**

The individual's interpretative activity is subjective. Unlike understanding, it envisages the existence of several horizontal judgments. The researchers consider that the significance of the interpretation is not as much in the material reflection accuracy and single sense generation but in the individual's ability to produce the own original interpretation by the creative transformation of the data [5, p.31]. Moreover, the attempt to create the only right interpretation encourages the individual towards the simplified observation and dogmatism. However, there are researchers who point out the fact that pluralism makes impossible the distinct criteria for the interpretation quality assessment to exist [2, p.77].

The subjective nature of the interpretation complicates the criteria determination, with which the judgement could be regarded as accurate. This only criterion first was the accuracy to estimate, which reflects its correspondence to the reality. Currently, it is believed that an evaluative judgement may be not accurate, but optimal. By its nature this criterion is a cognitive meta-objective, that is, the aim of formulating the evaluative judgement. If the evaluative judgement contributes to the achievement of this objective and is consistent with the criterion of optimality, it should be also considered as optimal for the behaviour and activity regulation [7].

In our study, we regard the quality of the interpretation as a set of characteristics that are related to its

capacity to meet the needs of the individual in the certainty. The other researchers determine interpretation as a combination of intellectual and personal means for understanding the reality by the subject of the interpretation [5]. Thus, the adequacy of, or the compliancy with the material perceived and the relevance or the purpose sense of the own attitude to this material can be regarded as the principle features of the interpretation. The combination of these features should determine the interpretation type with the respective level of quality – optimal, sufficient, insufficient. Let us consider these interpretation types. The optimal level of the interpretation quality is characterized by the adequate understanding and the relevance of the attitude; this type can be marked as rational interpretation. The sufficient quality level is to be defined by the adequacy of understanding but the irrelevance, the absence of grounding and the meaningfulness of the personal attitude are also present in this type of the interpretation, which can be defined as the intuitive interpretation. The insufficient quality level is characterized by the inadequacy of understanding but certain justification exists in it, albeit it is the imaginary one; we name this interpretation type as the quasi-rational interpretation. The insufficient level of the interpretation manifests the inadequacy of understanding and the unjustified attitude; this type can be also called as the irrational or absurd interpretation.

Thus, the above-outlined interpretation components can be evaluated according to the defined parameters. The summarized number of the features should determine a certain level of the interpretation quality. We also assume that there is the connection between the interpretation quality and the level of the personal reflexivity, as it is the level of the own mental actions that contribute to the personal interpretative activity.

The study on the interpretation in terms of procedural psychological aspect exhibits quite varying visions of the scientists on the problem of the interpretation stages. Depending on the content of the activity, its certain tasks, the form of the final outcomes, the authors propose a variety of the interpretation stages, as well as the original character of the interpretative actions [1; 7; 5]. In our opinion, within the interpretative activity, there can be distinguished the following stages of the interpretative actions to be consequently performed: 1) the problematisation that is the detection of the unknown or the obscure; 2) the analysis and the assumption namely, the detection of the essential; 3) the sense elaborating or the hidden meanings deciphering; 4) the synthesis or the idea de-

signing; 5) the positioning that is the development of the attitude and opinions.

We consider that the certain interpretative activities and the interpretation components are respectively carried out and take place at the certain stages of the interpretation: the material understanding, its sense determination, the attitude to it, the own opinion outlining, the consideration of the material in the different contexts, the reflection of the another person's mind, and the event causes understanding along with the consequences. We assumed that the interpretative actions are embodied in the process of the interpretation while the interpretation quality itself as a result of the interpretative activity is determined by the quality of its components. In our opinion, the interpretative actions constitute the external aspect of the interpretation activities and the personal features of the individual are its internal aspect that defines the specifics how the interpretation is performed.

Moreover, in order to identify the quality characteristics of the interpretative activity and to study its components, the empirical research has been conducted. For this research, the young people at early adult age (according to J. Birren, D.B. Bromley, E. Ericsson, G. Craig) were recruited to participate. They are 57 students of different majors aged 20 – 22, males and females.

For this study, the pictorial material representing a fragment of everyday life reality of a person was chosen as the object of the interpretation. The point is that the picture with a certain plot allows a variety of interpretations and involves identification of different senses. Based on the idea of the interpretation constituents, it was reasonable to study the sense of the picture plot itself, to determine its meaning, to realize the own attitude to the images and to generate the own opinion. These constitute the process of the interpretation. For the stated purpose, two pictures by H. Bidstrup were chosen as the material for the interpretation. The plot dynamics of the pictorial material is developing starting from the first picture, in which the initial point of the situation is depicted, to the final one, which reflects its finishing. The picture named "Hometask" represents a mother helping her little boy with his home task in a way, which allows him not to participate in this learning. The plot of the other picture, "The Botanist", shows an unexpected for the character result - planting a tree. The pictures were shown to the respondents without their titles. The absence of limitations for the respondents to choose response styles and no time restriction for this work promoted to the solution of the principle task in our study – to examine the quality of the interpretation

through the research of its separate constituents and to study the indicators of the individual's interpretative actions in early adulthood as well as to explore the connection between the interpretation and the reflexivity of the personality.

Furthermore, in order to explore the components of the individual's interpretation, we developed the original method in the form of specific tasks and questions relevant to these pictures: 1) to get a view of the picture and to compose a short story; 2) to assume what the author meant to express in the given plot; 3) to express their own ideas about the plot; 4) to find other themes for the picture plot; 5) to suppose the thoughts, which the character in the picture may have; 6) to determine what has caused the situation and what might be its proceedings. The written answers of the respondents were analyzed by the content analysis.

The peculiarities of the picture content understanding have been analyzed in terms of as follows: the adequacy or the reflection incompliance to the picture content; stating the facts or the attitude to them; description of events or a narrative story. Moreover, the ability of the individual to judge from the author's standpoint and to determine with this the whole meaning of the plot has been identified via such type of the individual's assumption or alternatively, this activity was substituted with the picture content analysis, expressing the attitude towards it or its morality. Furthermore, the ability to generate the own opinion has been valued by the judgement presence which appears to be the self-sustained. Additionally, the ability to implement many interpretations has been studied on condition whether there is the presence of other versions of the picture plot in a certain number and by defining other aspects of the situation. However, the ability to reflect the views and ideas of the other individual has been studied according to the presence of the main character's thoughts reflections, as opposite to the reflection of his feelings, his state, or his own reasons. Eventually, the ability to consider a certain episode of the picture plot in the extended context, which should provide the definition of its meaning, has been studied by the assumption of the cause and consequences of the situation. Thus, the maturity indicator of the individual's interpretational actions at the age of early adulthood has been obtained by way of quantitative calculation of the certain interpretation signs.

With the current study, we had to examine how exactly some components of the interpretation correlate with each other in the experimental sample setting as a whole and according to the individual indi-

cators. The quantitative indicators for the individual components of the interpretation and their qualitative characteristics allowed us to determine the maturity level of individual's interpretation actions that can be defined as optimal, sufficient or insufficient.

In this particular case, the optimal level is described by the following features: an adequate reflection of the plot content; whether actual or artistic description; the presence of the intention assumption from the standpoint of the author, the determination of the situation meaning; an expression of the own independent judgment, the opinion elaboration; giving an example of the other context or several contexts of the situation; the reflection of the characters' views and their adequate assumption; the reflection of the connection between the events of the plot.

The insufficient level corresponds to the following: inadequate reflection of the content or its partial reflection; semantic discrepancy of the author's intention or the absence of an assumption; the author's assumption irrelevant to the content of the story; the own opinion instead of the author's one; attributing to the characters' feelings, desires, intentions instead of the opinions; value judgment, morality, diagnosis; the absence of the own opinion, variations of the same judgment; the judgment apart from the content of the story or the author's intention repetition; an attribution to the causes of events rather than expression of the own opinion; absence of the other context as an alternative or general problem misunderstanding; the statement of the obvious facts with or without summarizing; the character's thoughts are not reflected at all or there is the shift into the reflection of the character's feelings, desires and intentions; the remote forecast of the effects is given instead of the immediate consequence of the plot events or free causes attribution have been given.

Additionally, the partial manifestation of the optimal level features and the presence of a small number of the insufficient level features can be defined as a sufficient level of interpretation actions.

The study on the characteristics of the separate components of the interpretation within the study group revealed the following.

By the parameter of the picture content understanding, we have found that there is quite a realistic reflection with the majority of the respondents (73.3%). The another part of the respondents showed the partial reflection of the plot content (37.0%), which has been manifested in the inability to understand the real author's intention expressed in 'Botanist' picture. This, perhaps, may occur due to the low level of individual's observation, as the situation out-

lined in the picture was of non-obvious nature.

Moreover, the assumptions with respect to the author's standpoint and the determination of the context via this action, have been produced by 63.3% of the respondents. Additionally, 16.0% of the respondents could not answer the question, 'Why did the author paint this picture?' It should be noted here that the ability to adequately understand the material (the answer to the question 'What is it?') does not always provide the individual with the ability to determine its meaning (to give an answer to the question 'Why is that?'). Let us pay attention to a certain insensitivity of the respondents to the "meaning task": the respondents agreed with the author's vision instead of expressing what the phenomenon under observation means.

Furthermore, 51.7% of the respondents managed to express their own opinion on the picture content. When comparing the data on the picture content understanding and the data of the own opinion expression, there has been the following tendency found: within the respondents, there is the group, made up of those who have shown the picture context understanding and also have expressed their own opinion (36.6%). Probably, the revealed tendency indicates the relation of these interpretation features: a person who properly understands the material can formulate his/her own opinion about it. However, the understanding did not become the condition promoting the opinion to appear within the other part of the group or the opinion was not formed on the basis of a proper understanding of the material: 33.4% of the respondents showed understanding of the situation, but did not express their own opinion while 30% of the respondents did not succeed with any of these indicators.

The analysis carried out with the data on understanding, with those on the context determination and those on the own opinion expression revealed that only 43% of the respondents possess the complete set of these features. That evidences that the lesser part of the respondents is able to adequately understand, to determine the context and to form the own opinion concerning the material, which is subjected to the interpretation.

The data index on the ability to find other contexts of the situation appeared to be quite low (48.3%), which indicates only one-sided view of the respondents on the perceived situation and inability to accept its other aspects. Such a narrow vision limits the individual in the versatile understanding of what is being perceived. We believe that this very ability to identify and combine different points of view and to define

different contexts provides a deeper comprehension of any phenomenon by the personality.

We are to admit that the lowest index found with the parameter of picture characters' opinions reflection (45%) is an unexpected result for us. The question 'What does the main character think?' leads the respondents to the considerations about desires, feelings, intentions, expectations and the moral of the plot, but not to the character's thoughts. This indicates that the majority of the respondents are not able to differentiate the thoughts from the other psychological phenomena and also to reflect the other person's thoughts with regard to the situation. We believe that the corresponding interpretation action – to make assumptions about the other person's thoughts – is essential in the interpretation process. The optimal level of the interpretation quality, as it is mentioned earlier, is conditioned by the understanding adequacy and well-grounded judgments about the perceived phenomenon. The development of the corresponding interpretation activity should encourage the general ability to interpretation.

Eventually, the data showing how the respondents determine the cause and the consequences of the depicted situation evidence that the majority of the respondents (65%) express adequate assumptions. To include a separate moment of the reality into the overall context means to reveal its sense. Thus, the presence of the cause-and-effect understanding signs of the events indicates the adequate awareness of the interpretation.

In the course of the test, each respondent obtained a certain amount of the points. By the scores, the respondents have been divided into groups with high (5 - 6 points), medium (3-4 points) and low (0-2 points) levels of interpretational actions. The insufficient interpretation level has been found with 37% of the respondents, the sufficient one - with 40%, and the optimal level - with 23%. We assume that the indicator of the insufficient interpretation level found with a third of the respondents in early adulthood suggests the need for the targeted development of the interpretation actions as the ability to interpret cannot be developed by itself within in the mind as an age-related change.

Moreover, the research provides the measurement of the reflexivity development as the personal component of the interpretive activity and its comparison with qualitative characteristics of the interpretation. The reflexivity of the individual was studied in accordance with A. V. Karpov method [5]. The high level of the reflexivity is found only with 10% of the people with whom the research has been conducted,

70% of them possess the medium reflexivity, and the low level of the reflexivity development is revealed with 20% of the respondents. What calls attention to itself is the indicator of the low level of the reflexivity development with the group under the research. In our view, at the age of early adulthood, the reflexivity of the individual should be developed to a sufficient degree, as the psychophysical and psychological preconditions for this psychical function are to have been developed during the previous age developmental stage. Thus, the reason for the low level of the reflexivity development in early adulthood may be connected with the individual peculiarities of the personal development of the individual.

Furthermore, the comparison of the indicators by the specific parameters of the interpretation and the reflexivity revealed a real correlative relation:  $r = 0.98$ , at  $p < 0.01$ . In other words, the optimal level of the interpretative actions is connected with the high level of the reflexivity. Eventually, the comparison made with the personal indicators of these parameters also showed the relevant tendency.

### Conclusions and further research perspectives

The interpretative activity of the individual manifests itself through the certain interpretative actions: understanding the material, determining its meaning, elaborating the own attitude to it, consideration of the material in different contexts, the reflection of thoughts of the other individual, understanding the cause and consequences of the event.

The empirical research carried out on the qualitative characteristics of the interpretative activity for the individuals at the age of early adulthood shows as followed: there is a quite appropriate understanding of the material interpreted; the observation level is not high; defining the essential in the material does not always correspond with its sense revealing; the adequacy of understanding is poorly connected with the personal opinion forming; there is the low level of the skills to determine various contexts; there is also the low level of the reflection of the other individual's thoughts; there are the skills present to determine appropriately the cause and consequence link; the average data on the reflexivity correlate with the average data of the awareness.

Eventually, generally the development level of the interpretative actions at the age of early adulthood can be determined as sufficient, as provided with adequate understanding, but it lacks the grounding of the judgment about the phenomenon under interpretation; the interpretation is shown mostly by the rational and the intuitive types.

We hope that the further researches within the psy-

chology of the interpretation are in the determination of the conditions for the sense coinage or shaping along with the individual's awareness of the attitude to a certain phenomenon and the personal opinion in the interpretational activity. The other important thing is the development of the observation and the reflexivity as the individual characteristics, which determine the efficiency of the interpretation.

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