

Title: The Philophonetics Therapeutic Modality: Its contribution in the diversified cultures of South African Society in the 21st Century and beyond

The Professorial Inaugural lecture presented by Jabulani Thwala on 14 August 2018, at the University of Zululand – South Africa

1. Introduction

This lecture takes place when my time to say good bye to UNIZULU community is just under three years. It is therefore appropriate for me to take this opportunity to thank all the UNIZULU students, employees, employer, community and the Mkhwanazi Tribal Authority. I thank you all for the support you have directly and indirectly given me. This lecture is dedicated to all of you. “As long as we live, let us all serve humanity with dignity and dedication. The level at which you are serving this beloved institution is recognized and highly appreciated. I wish you all a wonderful and successful future. I wish to further say: if you rise as an individual, remember to take others with you – no matter how few they are – there will make a positive difference in our community which will result in a happy and healthy society today and beyond.

As I get into the business of today, remember that as a member of this audience, you are a wonderful person and you are here for a specific purpose. This is just a lifetime with its specific goal – appreciate yourself, you are important. Those that could not attend today’s lecture are not left behind. I will send a positive energy through sounds, gesture and movement which will reach them through YOU – spread the positive energy – this world needs it

For the purpose of this wonderful opportunity UNIZULU has afforded me; among a number concepts or topics I would have spoken about, I have purposely and specifically chosen a modality that I am convinced, we all can relate to. It is true that before we started speaking or talking as infants, we all used different forms of movements, sounds and gestures. This comes from the centre of *I AM*, the core SELF. The history of Philophonetics Counselling suggests that Yehuda Tagar had already introduced Philophonetics in England and Australia in the 1980s while I only had a taste of it in 2002. The name Philophonetics literally means ‘Love of Sounds’ and broadly ‘conscious relationship to one’s experience through Sensing, Movement, Visualisations and the Sounds of human speech’ (Sherwood, 2005).

All over the world, psychologists and psychotherapists speak of the best possible therapeutic interventions they can use for a specific clientele. A selected group of health professionals is known for its specialties but the majority of these professionals wait for their clients in their fancy offices be it in government hospital settings or private offices where the *talk show* is the mode of intervention. Ideally, in order for the clients to be offered therapeutic services or interventions, some screening becomes a priority and an appropriate referral is made to the relevant health professional. The screening process is however not often the case, as the majority of today's health professionals have to make a living, especially in their expensive Private Practices. The time for the session is also a major issue. "The more time the client takes in explaining his or her *presenting issue* or problem while I meticulously analyze it, the more the client will pay, and the more sessions the client is likely to attend". In the commercial world like this one, for the pain clients endure over a number of sessions, the richer the therapist becomes. Philophonetics counselling activities are consciously governed and controlled by the client who is in charge of the session and its length. This is the beauty of this modality. Philophonetics therapists/counsellors pride themselves about being conscious of WHO should benefit first. I equate this to the fiduciary as community psychologists we have to our communities be it the student community, client community or ordinary members of the community. The father of community psychology at the University of Zululand, the Emeritus Professor Stephen David Edwards would attest to the above claim.

The Philophonetics Modality operates on the basis of EQUALITY, RESPECT, and being EMPLOYED for the period dictated or suggested by the CLIENT who is in charge of his or her situation/presenting issue. The respect I am making reference to here is the one that puts forward the understanding of who the human being is. That is, the BODY – MIND and SOUL/SPIRIT which is the totality of the human being on the Earth's surface where the natural elements are ***the givens*** for the benefit of living organisms including humans. Humans are regarded as higher beings due to the opportunity of having their brains developing more than that of other animals who use their four legs for walking thus get negatively affected by the force of gravity.

2. Why I have decided to choose this modality?

The choice of Philophonetics Counselling Modality for today's lecture was informed by a number of advantages listed below:

- a) it is a relatively short-term intervention;
- b) it provides the so called "take-away" skills or tool after each session;
- c) culture is not a barrier;
- d) it uses **the given**; natural elements e.g. sun, vegetation, air, water etc.,
- e) it is not expensive and is available to all clients and
- e) it involves the client as a whole i.e. body, mind and soul.

Furthermore, there are historical and experiential reasons why this modality became the best fitting platform for today's interaction and sharing.

The University of Zululand, through Prof SD Edwards, the then HoD of Psychology, selected me as the postdoctoral student at an ambassadorial level to acquire an additional alternative therapeutic skill at Sophia College in Western Australia. This was a very clear message to me to go and represent UNIZULU and plough back. Indeed I felt a need to plough back to the UNIZULU community. "We are who we are through others". I have specifically chosen Philophonetics approach because it does what other forms of psychotherapy have failed to do, it focuses on sensing, movement, gesture, visualisation and sounds that can be employed for recovering, accessing and realising deep seated stressful experiences that often go unnoticed. Furthermore, in Philophonetics counselling sessions "clients" come for **two** main reasons. That is, when they are on top of the world, doing well emotionally they come and celebrate. The counsellor and the client together share suitable sounds to strengthen the client's level of functionality and how to prevent potential emotional challenges in future. I doubt if other forms of counselling/therapy explicitly do this. This form of intervention allows them the opportunity to be mindful of the coping skills clients have used to be at the top of their lives. Self-help tools are shared with clients in sessions of this nature. The

power of the client's mind is upheld. Beyond this Modality, I would like to acknowledge the contributions that Community Psychology has made to a handful of us who were trained by UNIZULU, Department of Psychology. UNIZULU is the only university in South Africa that offers an additional professional degree in Community Psychology. Thanks to Professor Edwards and the team he worked with at the time of accreditation.

The Community Psychology programme has further taught me how to look at humanity with respect and realize its plurality/multiplicity as well as how powerful it is when it functions as a coherent unit. Its definition incorporates elements such as: *of, with, by, and for* the people. Immediately, a clear message comes up: "people are experts in their own ways" and we as therapists must acknowledge and respect that. When we interact and engage people or community members, we engage them as our *EQUALS* because we are what we are today because of the lessons we have learnt from them and probably what they have learnt from us. When we know what they do not know we should openly and honestly share with them. Philophonetics counsellors are for development and promotion of healthy society because once there is a healthy society there will be celebration of life at a promotive level. I personally prefer to operate at a promotive and empowerment level rather than at curative level which is *trying* to putting together the broken pieces all the time.

2.1 The origins of Philophonetics Therapeutic Modality and how it works?

The philophonetics method of counselling stems from Steiner's model of human nature. The overlapping dynamics of the various components give rise to his psychological teaching and his theory of sounds. The theoretical framework and methodological routes are based on the spiritual work of Steiner. Tagar (1996) stated that philophonetics was initially developed as a method of deep observation of the interactive dynamics of the body, psyche and consciousness for the purposes of performing arts. It was formulated out of research in the fields of drama, humanistic psychology and psychosophy.

Philophonetics is a method of exploration, expression and transformation of inner experiences which combines counselling and artistic expression, body work and self

observations. In all parts of the therapeutic process the client is completely in charge of the *IT* being the sole source of information, observation and actions. The role of the therapist is merely the provision of a range of useful possibilities, points of views, exercises and practical tools for achieving goals defined by the client. It uses four modes of non-verbal communication:

1. Sensing
2. Movement-gesture
3. Visualization
4. Sound

Through instrumentality of sensation every emotional experience can be traced to its origin through the traces it leaves in the subtle dynamics of the body and through gestures and movement which can directly express the sensation that dimension can become observable and accessible to treatment (Tagar, 2000). The expressive gesture and movement enhance the imaginative ability to create precise mental pictures which can reveal the inner psycho-somatic dynamic underlying the condition in question. Spontaneous visualization becomes a powerful and reliable mode of knowing.

In Philophonetics the human body is regarded as an instrument of meaning, enabling an inner being to live in an outer world. It claims that the human body can serve as a precise map for the human psyche, through which every aspect of one's inner life could be traced and observed in full consciousness. The body and its expressive ability is regarded as a screen on which the psychic dynamic can be projected and from which it could be read. Philophonetics is based on the following assumptions:

- Everyone is potentially capable of knowing what is happening within one's body and soul
- Everyone is potentially as strong as the strength of one's experiences, good and bad, having the potential of power to take charge of one's life
- Everyone is potentially richly endowed with every quality one truly needs for one's wellbeing. (Tagar, 1999b:10).

Formal sessions take place in sound-proof rooms if in towns and cities where offices are close to each other. Ideally, this modality is suited for natural environments where there is ample space for all sounds- including explosive sounds such as BHAA. Office environment should be simple with ample space for movement and gestures. A small table and two chairs where both the therapist and the client spend the shortest time 20% of the session to discuss the IT/imprint are provided. Of importance, the size, shape, sound and colour, of the IT/imprint and how it affects the client is captured and depicted on an A4 blank sheet of paper. Materials include two A4 blank sheets of paper and crayons of all colours. A pen to write notes is also made available.

Philophonetics counselling is based on verbal and nonverbal stages. During the verbal stage, the counsellor/therapist spends about 20% of the session carefully listening to what the presenting issue is from the side of the client. Once the presenting scenario is clear to both the therapist and the client, the therapist ensures that the client is well socialized into the modality and its demands. It is the responsibility of the counsellor/therapist to demonstrate the steps of ENTER-EXIT-BEHOLD if the client has never been exposed to the modality.. The non-verbal mode starts when the counsellor/therapist starts demonstrating to the client. It is worth mentioning at this stage, that the counsellor/therapist finds out from the client how ready he or she is with regard to energy and willingness to move. If there is a *will* but the energy is low, the process of empowerment begins until the client is ready. A lot of education or induction takes place at this stage. Sounds and gestures are co-developed through teamwork by both the counsellor and the client. The counsellor guides the client in the choice of sounds only if the client is not forthcoming with sounds or is using suffocating sounds.

A client is further expected to make an “operational wish” meaning what the client wants to do with the issue. In depressive feelings for example, an issue of concern could be: “I want to do away with the heavy dark cloud over my shoulders.” Possible questions would be: What does this cloud do on your shoulders? What does it make you feel? During this stage there is talk about the IT or Negative imprint. This phase is also known as the **beholding phase**. That is, sitting at the table and discussing the imprint. Eighty percent (80%) of the time is spent ENTER-EXIT. A lot of action or body work,

movement and breathing take place at the non-verbal stage. This is the stage where the client dictates with regard to length of the session. As long as the client is fit and willing to participate in the action phase, the counsellor is obliged to participate until the client says it is enough. This goes without saying that the therapist must be fit and dressed comfortably for movement and gestures.

What does the counsellor take away from this modality? As the client conquers the negative imprint the counsellor conquers and get fit through movement and breathing. The counsellor becomes an instrument of change. How long does the session last? When the client says it is enough, the counsellor's job is over and both the client and the therapist go back to the table, BEHOLDING and reviewing the imprint. The size, color and shape of the imprint changes as it they are visualized by the client. Does the counsellor ask the client to schedule the next session? No. The counsellor can only indicate that if there is a need the client is free to make an appointment. Where does the counsellor start when the client does come for the second or subsequent session? The counsellor starts with what the client brings in to that session. We deal with HERE-AND-NOW not the past and who or what causes the presenting issue that we cannot change. Rather we devise strategies to cope or protect ourselves in challenging situations. "We walk and sit in a *gesture* to protect ourselves from any negative imprints".

Life is however challenging and from time to time we are caught off-guard and the negative imprint affects our *etheric* body and sometimes gets deeper into our *astral* body. All forms of therapy end up with, talking about the presenting issue.

2.2 Who is suitable for it?

This modality works well with clients who are 21 years old and above. The main reason for age is based on the seven year circle principle which states that if the IT/IMPRINT was experienced in the first seven months after birth, the IT is more likely to surface in the next seven year circle or later. History during the verbal phase provides an idea of the onset of the imprint. It is also more suitable for people who are not on psychiatric

medication as a client should be fully conscious during the therapeutic engagements. Clients are expected to have the ability to move and use sounds and gestures.

3. Lessons Learnt in the South African context

Philophonetics was introduced by Yahuda Tagar in South Africa in 2001 when he had a series of lectures in Cape Town. University of Zululand formally started teaching a component of Philophonetics in 2004. Both masters and doctoral students were introduced into this modality. The student who was supervised in this modality successfully completed her dissertation in 2008. Results from this study have indicated the effectiveness of Philophonetics counselling with a variety of clients from the Black Zulu culture who presented with symptoms of depression. All clients who participated in the study reported reduction of depressive symptoms on post-assessment.

A study with sexually abused participants had interesting results. Philophonetics counselling was compared with Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. As reported by the clients, Philophonetics Counselling was slightly more effective than Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. A recent study on patients presenting with depression has also shown the effectiveness of Philophonetics Counselling. Self-help tools have been used widely by psychology students particularly during master's selection interviews. Such knowledge is transferrable. For example, in one of the local health institutions, a PhD student offered group sessions with heads of sections in dealing with distress (negative stress). The participants reported the release of tension which they experienced in the workplace.

Self-help tools – for students going through interviews during job and educational selection have proven to be effective. The self-help tools are exactly what I also personally use on daily basis to cope with the challenges of life. What I teach I also use it for myself. I would recommend the self-help tools for all health professionals who are caring for others. Carers should also take care of themselves. In Philophonetics we take care of the carers through self-help/ self-care tools.

4. Future prospects of the Philophonetics Modality in promoting a healthy society

Philophonetics has become my niche area and I am passionate about developing a manual of common sounds that have been successfully used by a number of clients. It is also worth considering a book where South African experiences have been compiled for further use and research. A modified Philophonetics Model that will speak to the culture or rural based clients will be important going forward.

Conclusion

The Philophonetics Counselling Modality is relatively affordable and accessible to the majority of clients. It uses reasonable and readily available materials. Natural elements are available to assist clients in their daily lives. It is not only suitable for people with challenges. People/clients come for sessions even if they want to verify how well they are coping so that they can continue to promote their healthy lives. Visiting a Philophonetics Counsellor should be stigma free as there is no psychoanalysis of the client taking place during the session. The work done by both students and staff from the University of Zululand provides a strong potential for this modality to promote healthy individuals in the South African context with diversified cultures in years to come.

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