PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE – INTRODUCTORY INTERACTIVE PROJECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY SOFTWARE PRODUCED BY AN APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT. A CASE STUDY

Matei GEORGESCU

Spiru Haret University, Bdul. Basarabia 256, Bucharest, Romania
E-mail: matei.georgescu@.yahoo.com

Abstract*: The main projective methods are conceived to be applied in a classic-paper style and the virtual-e-learning style represents the only pre-license possible learning experience. The paper describes the experience of conceiving and using computer software in order to introduce the bases of projective psychology. The software (Matei Georgescu, Projective technique – interactive software, produced by Titu Maiorescu University, Bucharest, Romanian Copyright Office: 0113 / 06. 02. 2001) was used in the benefit of the third year students of a private university and support the direct experience with the virtual-stimulus-material of the main projective techniques such as Rotter, Düss, T.A.T., Rosenzweig, Rorschach, Szondi, Lüscher, Koch. Projective Psychology Lab was developed by the use of the computer and the Projective technique software over a semester of study. The program contains the following items: the projection concept, the analytic relation and the projective relation, verbal associative experiment, completing sentences test and fables method, Thematic Apperception Test, the frustration test, the inkblot test, the drive analysis test, the color test, the tree test, draw a person test. Each method presentation contains information about the technique, the stimulus-material and the manner of interpretation. The access to stimulus-material of the Thematic Apperception Test, the frustration test, the inkblot test and the drive test analysis is possible in the order of test protocol. The software allows the color calibration of Lüscher test and also quotation examples. The Rorschach stimulus-material can be rotated within 360 degrees limit. The quotations index of the tree test is accessible in the order of the main interpretative zones. Despite the fact that the projective techniques were not conceived to be applied in the virtual-computerized style, during the three years pedagogical experiences with the Projective technique – interactive software, we have noticed the success of such an introductory way of learning.*

Keywords: *projective psychology, projective techniques, stimulus-material, computer virtual-projection.*

I. THE NEED FOR THE ELECTRONIC LEARNING PROJECT IN PROJECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Projective psychology is a sensitive and nuanced field of psychodiagnosis. Under this aspect, conceiving an introduction to this subject, dedicated to first Cycle students, represents a complex task. This is because, in general, access to projective instruments is restricted to students who, at the same time, need primary orientation in this field of excellence of psychological diagnosis. Many of the projective tests cannot be taught as a rough guide: for instance, when presenting the Thematic Apperception Test, it is not enough for the student to be presented one or two stimulus boards, the close quarters with the entire stimulus material being necessary. Nevertheless, the form of training of the projective psychology lab, associated to the Projective Techniques course (included in the third-year syllabus of a private psychology university), is brought down to unsubstantial, partial contact with the stimulus material of various tests.

The idea of creating software dedicated to the interactive introduction to projective psychology was thus a consequence of the natural imperative to organize an adapted learning environment.

The stimulus material of the projective tests has been designed in order for it to be applied to current psychodiagnosis situations in printed form. Therefore, the right of use and the validity of the results refer mainly to the printed form of the tests and it's based on the fact that the projective techniques have been built and validated in this manner. For this purpose, the electronic version of the stimulus material presentation was a compromise, balanced between the copyright trickiness and the exclusively didactic use of the stimulus material.

We created the program in Visual Basic, in respect to the topics of the course, using resources specific to electronic learning, such as interactivity, direct and structured access to the information necessary for understanding each technique.

After creation and pre-testing with the support of a group of students, the program was produced by the University Department of Applied Psychology and registered at the Romanian Copyright Office [1]. The projective psychology seminar turned into a projective psychology lab, and was transferred to a personalized room, properly equipped, so that each student can be able to directly work with the program. This unique context of electronic learning in teaching projective psychology has also been noticed and appreciated by the commission that visited the university in order to grant accreditation.

II. CONFLUENCES OF THE VIRTUAL NATURE OF THE PROJECTIVE SITUATION

Electronic learning in projective psychology can be applied as a follow-up of the analysis of factors the virtual nature of the stimulus material introduce into the relationship, as well as their influence on the validity of the results. It is necessary to analyze elements such as the structure of the stimulus material, the transference, the rule of free association [2].

Any stimulus situation that evokes or facilitates the projection phenomenon can be considered a resource of a projective method, insofar as it is not structured to trigger specific answers. In the binomial relationship of projective psychodiagnosis, the test material interposes between the practitioner and his subject, functioning as a "third party", as screen of the projection. Under this aspect, the stimulus material, in its electronic form, functions as background ("third party") and triggers the projection. We can assert that structurally, the process of becoming a third party isn't affected by transposing the stimulus material in virtual form.

The difference from the « classic » situation resides in the validity of interpretative categories and the way they've been elaborated (starting from a triangular situation when the stimulus material was not presented virtually). Therefore, we believe that because of its virtual nature, the stimulus material does not modify, in the background, the projective situation, but it raises the question of interpretative validity.

Nevertheless, as long as the didactic nature of the situation is taken into account, we believe that this drawback is poor in relation to the benefits of the interpretative exercise, aside from the objectivity of the obtained results.

Regardless of the real or virtual nature of the situation, the instruction provides the subject with a high degree of freedom, which can turn into a constraint and resistance factor. Absolute freedom of the subject with respect to his or her expression mobilizes the repressed psychism and its pressure will objectify at the level of anguish. "The sentence to freedom", specific to the projective technique, generally glides into a "sentence to anguish", triggered by the "void" the subject experiences towards the stimulus material, having the effect of mobilizing the profound resources of personality [3]. Consequently, aside from the anguish phenomenon, regression constitutes in various degrees a specific phenomenon implied in projective diagnosis, which supports the quality and profoundness of the results.

The virtual third party stimulus material is the primary source of data obtained by means of diagnostic relation, as it is triggered in the case of « real » stimulus material as well, but it maintains the trickiness of transference in the projective situation and its effects. Either "real" or virtual third party, the transferential relationship between the practitioner and his subject induces a factor that cannot be controlled.

The projective situation can be considered by technical and theoretical denizen a "concentrated psychoanalytical process", provided in a unique session. The virtual projective situation also benefits from the advantages of the free association method. In both the analytical situation and the virtual-projective one, the subject is invited to express, without categorizing, any element, thought or representation that comes up in his or her internal field. This method, which became the fundamental rule of the analytic setting, has been the result of subsequent reshuffles of the psychoanalytical technique and mainly refers to avoiding the habitual information filter that allows for the distortion of the subject's speech, by mediate derivation of the repressed representations, hence the phenomenon of resistance, which manifests variously according to the dynamics of the subject.

III. CONCEPTS OF PROJECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY WITH VALENCES IN CREATING THE PROGRAM

As a result of the research of the psychoanalytic school and the mention of Ego defense mechanisms, in psychodiagnosis, methods in which the stimulus material is low-structured have appeared, facilitating the phenomenon of projection. In psychoanalysis, the projection is defined as an archaic type of defense by means of which the subject expels from within himself and locates in the object, as a "screen of projection", qualities, feelings, desires, even "fragments of himself" he doesn't know or represses [4]. The advantages of such a method, based on the projection mechanism, mainly refer to the profound nature of the obtained data, considering the fact that cognitive modulation, in the sense of secondary processing, is reduced.

Therefore, to explore the concept of projection and especially to contour it in an explicit experimental form is a difficult task. It is in fact the situation of the theoretic system proposed by psychoanalysis and the resistance or even the historical opposition of the scientific community to some concepts of this school.

Projective psychology is, under some aspects and in the case of certain techniques, an experimental psychoanalysis undertaking. Therefore, any electronic guide in projective psychology implies a firm rational effort, in the service of conceptual delimitation, but with a relative value. The absolute value resides in the direct experience with the stimulus material, in unprocessed reactions and their observance. We have tried to take over this value in the form of a constructive principle of the electronic guide.

The projective situation is paradoxical, as the ability to use the projective test is symmetrical to the clinical ability. The interpretative undertaking of the projective test, disengaged by the interpretative algorism (which would have been useful in experimental-nomothetic order), is inscribed to the emic, ideographic orientation level, and it makes the practitioner face essential difficulties [5]. Interpretative freedom, advantageous to capturing certain typical, unique aspects of the subject, runs a risk to distort the material, by the pressure of its own repressed contents and associated anguish. From this perspective, a good introduction to the projective trickiness would consist of an "anguish lab", an experimental situation in which the student relates to the sources of the way he learns about the reality of the subject, before considering them (rationalizing, intellectualizing and abstracting them) [6]. In this order we have introduced, for instance, in the preliminaries of the program (Program 1, item 5) an application consisting of experimental sequences, which allows for the contact with the projective stimulus material. This way, epistemic resources of projective psychology, of the relation between Ego and Alter, of the way the diagnostic portrait of the subject is "built" can be highlighted.

The criteria for selecting the projective techniques included in the program were common to those of the paper signed by Proffesor Mihaela Minulescu [7] and they referred to quality, the level of difficulty, technique efficiency and variety. As a result of the selection, the program contains

introductions to the verbal association technique, fill-in-the-blanks technique, fable technique, apperception technique, frustration technique, ink stain technique, drive analysis technique, color analysis technique and drawing technique, to which two preliminary sections are added.

IV. CONSTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

The program consists of twelve items displayed tree-like (in Appendix, the root screen). In order for the navigation to be easier, we introduced the keys "F1-12", as well as facilitations of the cursor, such as placing it on an item with or without pressing the button. We have used the same technique presentation algorithm, with some variations determined by their specific nature. In the case of ink stain (Rorschach) test, a 360 degree rotation of the boards is possible, according to the test application protocol.

In the two introductory sections (Program 1 and Program 2) we introduced presentations that combine information with images. In the case of techniques that required an important interpretative catalogue, such as the color analysis technique or the drawing technique, we included a database that facilitates obtaining the necessary interpretative information.

In the case of the color analysis technique, we introduced the facilitation to calibrate colors, which allows for obtaining the necessary color nuances with respect to the chromatic balance of the monitor on which the program is running.

By way of example, we render the structure of program 10 (Lüscher Test), afferent to the color analysis technique, as well as its clues for use (see in Appendix):

1. Material of the test – Folder \ Material of the test – F1
2. Method – Folder \ Method – F2
3. Application - Folder\ Application – F3. If the colors weren't calibrated, according to the chromatic balance of the monitor, to the original ones, a calibration window will automatically open (in which it will be possible to go back later by: Folder \ Color calibration. For further calibration it is necessary to introduce the following passwords: 1 = MG, 2 = 1968. The code of the color to be calibrated will be introduced and the button "Edit color" will be pressed. The necessary nuance will be obtained by means of the three cursors (RGB) and it will be saved by pressing "Save color"
4. Dimensioning
    A. General rules - Folder \ Dimensioning \ General rules – F4
    B. Anxiety – Folder \ Dimensioning \ Anxiety – F5
    C. Compensation – Folder \ Dimensioning \ Compensation – F6
    D. Exaggerated compensation – Folder \ Dimensioning\ Exaggerated compensation – F7
    E. Intensity of anxiety and compensation compulsion – Folder \ Dimensioning\ Intensity of anxiety and compensation compulsion – F8
    F. Dimensioning exercises – Folder \ Dimensioning\ Dimensioning exercises – F9. Dimension the presented examples and then, in order to verify, press the left button of the mouse on the area in which it has to be dimensioned
    G. Prognosis – Folder \ Prognosis – F11
5. Interpretative elements – Folder \ Elements and interpretative catalogue – F12
    A. Color significance – "Color" window – after it has been activated it can be accessed by using both the cursor and the keyboard, namely the arrow keys
    B. Place in the sequence significance– "Position" window – after it has been activated it can be accessed by using both the cursor and the keyboard, namely the arrow keys
    C. Interpretative catalogue – the menu "Interpretative catalogue" is accessed. Using the cursor or the arrow keys, the value of the two functions is introduced, after which the button that precedes the two windows – "F…" is pressed. By placing the cursor on the text displayed after this operation, the functions for which the interpretation is being made will be shown again

V. CONCLUSIONS

The introductory to projective psychology electronic learning program has been used with very good didactic results, for many generations of students. The projective psychology lab assisted by the electronic environment has been the only viable learning solution which allowed for direct contact to the stimulus material and constituted a novelty in the field of didactics of psychology specialities, with application potential to other study disciplines.

The circulation of three hundred copies of the program quickly ran short, which indicated the quality of the product and that of the electronic environment in learning, in general. Due to exclusively contextual reasons, the program has not been developed in further editions, in the initial institutional frame.

Electronic learning in the field of projective psychology poses essential questions with respect to the theory and practice of projective psychology. The introduction of the virtual environment generates a new projective technique development field that will surely require validation studies specific to the new environment.

References

[1] Georgescu, M., *Projective technique – interactive software*, produced by Titu Maiorescu University, Bucharest, Romanian Copyright Office: 0113 / 06. 02. 2001.
[2] Georgescu, M. 2005. *Vademecum in projective psychology,* Oscar Print, Bucharest, pag. 7-21.
[3] Anzieu D., Chambert C.1992. *Les méthodes projectives*, P.U.F., Paris,1992, pag. 58.
[4] Laplanche J., Pontalis J.-B. 1994, *The psychoanalysis vocabulary*, Humanitas, Bucharest, pag. 308.
[5] Fosberg, I. A. 2006. *On teaching projective techniques in an academic setting*, Journal of Clinical Psychology, Edited By: Timothy R. Elliott (Editor) and John C.Volume 5, Issue 4, pag. 409–414.
[6] Laplanche, J.1981. *Problématiques I, l'Angoisse*, P.U.F., Paris, pag. 35-90.
[7] Minulescu, M. 2000. *Projective technique*, Titu Maiorescu, Bucharest, 2000.

Appendix

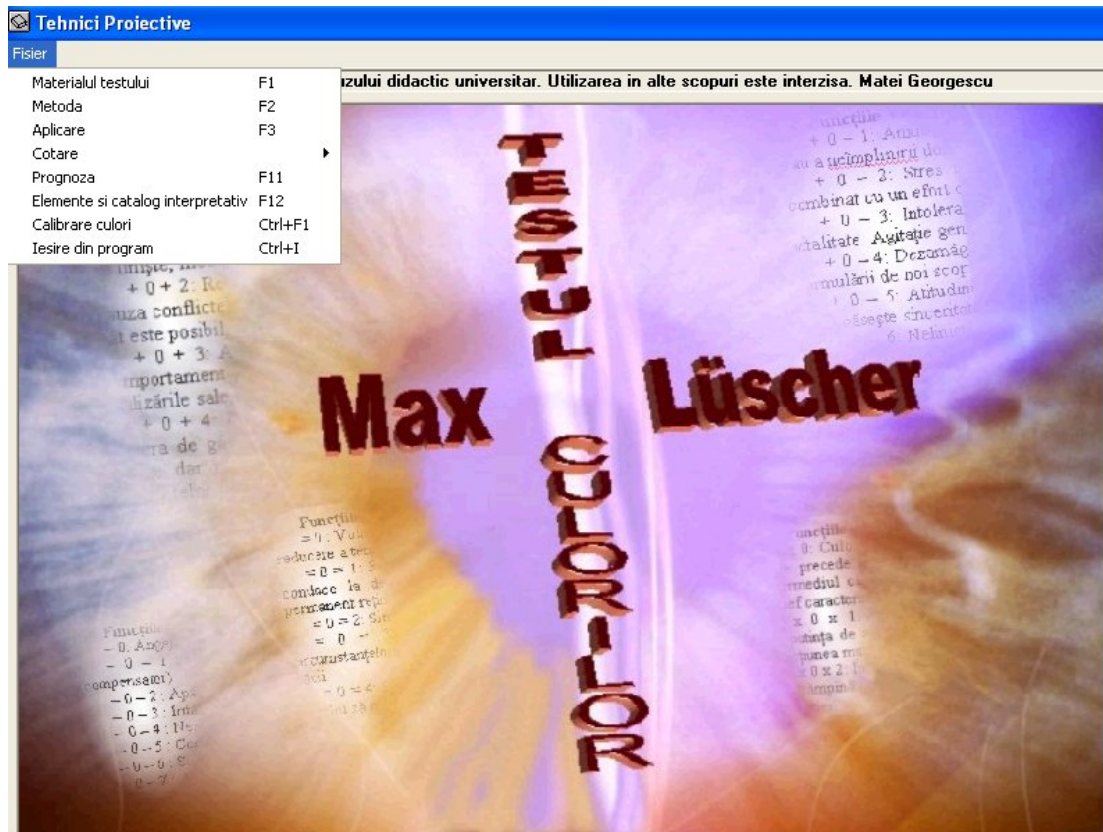**Figure 1.** The main screen of the root program

Figure 2. The main screen of the program 10 - Lüscher Test