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**Іншомовна підготовка у програмах з навчання майбутніх фахівців
раннього розвитку та дошкільної освіти в США**

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Анотація: *Стаття має на меті висвітлити специфіку іншомовної підготовки майбутніх фахівців із раннього розвитку та дошкільної освіти США.*

Методи. *Дизайн дослідження є аналітично-описовим, що підкреслює комплекс взаємодоповнюючих теоретичних методів: критичний аналіз законодавчих, навчальних, психолого-педагогічних джерел з досліджуваної проблеми; монографічний метод – задля інтерпретації отриманих результатів у логічний спосіб.* **Результати.** *Аналіз освітніх програм для майбутніх фахівців у галузі раннього розвитку та дошкільної освіти у провідних закладах вищої освіти США показав, що навчання іноземним мовам інтегровано у зміст професійної освіти та вважається важливим компонентом формування міжкультурної компетентності майбутніх педагогів. Ця підготовка вирізняється: системністю (у більшості програм іноземна мова (іспанська, французька або китайська) включена як обов'язкова або вибіркова дисципліна); міжкультурним компонентом (програми передбачають навчальні дисципліни, що поєднують іншомовну підготовку з вивченням культурних традицій різних етнічних груп. Такий підхід сприяє формуванню толерантності у студентів, здатності будувати ефективну взаємодію з дітьми та їхніми сім'ями з різним культурним походженням); інтеграцією з педагогічною практикою (студенти мають можливість проходити стажування в дитячих садках та центрах раннього*



розвитку, де функціонують двомовні або багатомовні освітні програми); гнучкістю та варіативністю (програми передбачають вибір рівня навчання іноземним мовам залежно від попереднього мовного досвіду студентів, що робить процес навчання більш індивідуалізованим). **Висновки.** Здобуті результати свідчать, що іношомовна підготовка в США вважається важливим засобом забезпечення професійної мобільності та конкурентоспроможності майбутніх фахівців у галузі раннього розвитку та дошкільної освіти, а також необхідним інструментом їх ефективної роботи в полікультурному та багатомовному освітньому середовищі.

Ключові слова: іношомовна підготовка, педагогічна освіта раннього та дошкільного віку, білінгвальна освіта, міжкультурна комунікація, полікультурна освіта, вища освіта США.

Foreign language training in the U. S. curricula for future specialists in early childhood development and preschool education

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Abstract: *The article aims to highlight the specifics of foreign language training of the U. S. future specialists in early childhood development and preschool education.*

Methods. *The research design for the study is analytical and descriptive, which emphasizes a complex of complementary theoretical methods: critical analysis of legislative, instructive, psychological and pedagogical sources on the issue under research; monographic method – to interpret the results obtained in a coherent and logical way.* **Results.** *The analysis of educational programs for specialists in the field of early development and preschool education in leading U. S. higher education institutions showed that foreign language training is integrated into the content of professional education and is considered an important component of the formation of intercultural competence of future teachers. This training is distinguished by: systematicity (in most programs, a foreign language (Spanish, French or Mandarin) is included as a mandatory or elective discipline); intercultural component (programs provide courses that combine language training with the study of cultural traditions of different ethnic groups. This approach helps to form tolerance in students, the ability to build effective interaction with children and their families with different cultural*



*backgrounds); integration with pedagogical internship (students have the opportunity to undergo internships in kindergartens and early childhood development centers, where bilingual or multilingual education programs operate); flexibility and variability (programs provide for the choice of the level of foreign language training depending on the students' previous language experience, which makes the learning process more individualized). **Conclusions.** The results obtained confirm that foreign language training in the United States is considered an important means of ensuring professional mobility and competitiveness of future specialists in the field of early development and preschool education, as well as a necessary tool for effective work in a multicultural and multilingual educational environment.*

Keywords: *foreign language training, early childhood and preschool teacher education, bilingual education, inetercultural communication, multicultural education, U. S. higher education.*

Problem statement. At the current stage of society's development, domestic preschool educational institutions have new tasks, caused by Ukraine's entry into the international educational space, the transition of society to a qualitatively new level, and the need for statehood as a historical need of the nation. Preschool education in Ukraine has essentially found itself at the intersection of two main vectors of its development – national and European integration, which has led to the need for an analytical study of foreign pedagogical experience in training future specialists in the preschool sector. This necessitates the critical study and creative application of the experience of the United States – one of the leading and highly developed countries in the world. The U. S. “educational experience contains socio-cultural potential, which for Ukraine reveals the possibility of providing alternative ways of social perception and actions that challenge stereotypical hierarchical norms in Ukrainian society, and implementing new methodological strategies in domestic higher education” [1, p. 27].



Additionally, the topicality of the study is determined by economic, political, social, and sociocultural changes both in Ukraine and in the world as a whole. The need to understand and adequately relate to other cultures and languages is particularly important today. As “modern world overwhelmingly recognises the importance of foreign languages in business, military alliances and in ensuring a world-class education” [2, p. 27]. The intensive development of intercultural communication at various levels objectively requires close interaction between speakers of different languages and cultures, which demonstrates the growing role of a foreign language not only as a means of communication but also as a reflection of a foreign culture. It allows for the most effective integration into the culture of the people and country of the target language. The process of learning foreign languages itself serves as the initial stage of this integration. Foreign languages are viewed as a cultural and historical environment, immersion in which enables understanding, worldview, and a sense of the national mentality of the people.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The analysis of the scholarly literature by the U. S. authors [3; 4; 5] demonstrates a clear shift towards practice-focused models of future preschool specialists education: internships, core curriculum, and residency models constitute the core of modern reforms. There is convincing evidence that American structured practice with sufficient duration and high-quality mentoring improves the readiness of future early childhood and preschool specialists for professional activity [3]. At the same time, the U. S. researchers V. Stayton, B. Smith, S. Dietrich and M. Bruder [4] also point to the methodological challenges that higher education institutions in the United States face when training future preschool educators: in particular, the strong heterogeneity of educational programs makes unambiguous generalizations impossible. R. Gomez, S. Kagan and E. Fox [5] discuss the lack of quality, equity, and sustainability in training future early childhood and preschool specialists.



In turn, Ukrainian scholars V. Demianova and I. Drach [6] note that the training of future preschool teachers in the USA is a pressing problem for researchers, as it has its own characteristics related to different state requirements for the professional readiness of preschool teachers, as well as to inconsistency in the application of professional association standards in state policy and university programs.

The research conducted by Ukrainian educator N. Melnyk [7] has demonstrated that in the USA there are trends towards: regulation of courses in university curricula, increasing the duration of study, increasing the duration of pedagogical internship; requirements are being put forward for the complex of competences of future preschool educators.

When it comes to foreign language training of future specialists, different aspects of this sphere are widely discussed in modern academic discourse. In particular, Ukrainian scholars S. Fedorenko, O. Ameridze and L. Matsuk [8] argue that learning through a second or additional language is becoming quite common in different parts of the world. This is done taking into account the concept of translanguism, which involves not just a combination of several languages and cultures and their interaction, but rather a smooth flow from one linguoculture to another, in which the student has the opportunity to use his entire language repertoire and realize his personal potential [8, p.130]. And “it is impossible to learn a foreign language without simultaneous reference to sociocultural aspects of society on the basis of different modes of communication” [9, p. 179]. It should be taken into account in preparing early childhood teachers to work with young dual language learners, as M. Zepeda, D. Castro and S. Cronin note [10]. Early childhood programs should be prepared to optimize the early experiences of young children, who have a home language other than English and are learning two or more languages at the same time, “by holding high expectations, capitalizing on their strengths – including cultural and linguistic strengths – and providing them with the individualized developmental and learning supports necessary to succeed in school [11, p. 1].



Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem. In Ukrainian educational science, insufficient attention has been paid to the analysis of the features of educational programs at the U. S. colleges and universities for training teachers of preschool education institutions. In particular, this concerns the study of American experience in foreign language training of future specialists in the preschool sector. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the analysis of modern educational programs for training specialists in preschool education, which are carried out at US universities, and the identification of their features to increase the effectiveness of the corresponding training in domestic higher education institutions.

Formulation of the objectives of article (setting the task). The article aims to highlight the specifics of foreign language training of the U. S. future specialists in early childhood development and preschool education. This aim presupposes the realization of the following objectives: 1) to determine a typical preschool teacher training program through analyzing the curricula of some major U. S. higher education institutions; 2) to scrutinize the requirements for foreign language training of the U. S. future specialists in early childhood development and preschool education; 3) to cover foreign language training programs for future preschool educators.

Presentation of the main research material. Early childhood and preschool teacher training in the United States has a long history and is closely linked to the development of both the general education system and research in child psychology, sociology, and pedagogy. Early childhood and preschool educators most often earn a bachelor's or master's degree and may also pursue professional certification in accordance with state requirements. The goal of these educational programs is to develop students not only knowledge of child development but also skills in the practical organization of educational processes in a diverse cultural environment and communicative competence.

The analysis of the curricula of some major U. S. universities (e.g., the University of Michigan (<https://umich.edu/>), Arizona State University



(<https://www.asu.edu/>), Boston University (<https://www.bu.edu/>), Teachers College of Columbia University (<https://www.tc.columbia.edu/>)) shows that future early childhood and preschool educators study the following courses:

1. Courses in the psychology of child development:

- Child Development (patterns of cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children from birth to 8 years).
- Infant and Toddler Development (emphasis on early child development –from 0 to 3 years).
- Language Development in Early Childhood (speech development and bilingualism at an early age).

2. Courses in Pedagogy and Methodology of Preschool Education:

- Foundations of Early Childhood Education (includes the history and philosophy of preschool education in the US and abroad).
- Curriculum and Instruction for Preschool and Kindergarten (designing educational programs for children aged 3–6).
- Creative Arts in Early Childhood (covering music, visual arts, and theater as developmental tools).
- STEM in Early Childhood (approaches to integrating science, technology, and mathematics through play).

3. Inclusion and Diversity Courses:

- Teaching in a Multicultural Society (provides preparation for working in a multilingual and multicultural environment).
- Special Education in Early Childhood (supporting children with special educational needs).
- Classroom Management and Positive Guidance (strategies for managing behavior and building effective interactions).
- Family and Community Engagement (preparation for working with families).

4. Courses in Evaluation and Research Methods:



- Assessment in Early Childhood Education (methods for diagnosing and monitoring child development).

- Educational Research (fundamentals of educational research, methods, statistics, and data analysis).

5. Internships:

- Field Experiences I–III (three staged internships: 1) observation, 2) assistantship, and 3) independent teaching).

- Capstone Student Teaching (a final teaching internship, usually a full semester at an accredited preschool institution).

Therefore, a typical teacher training program at the U. S. higher education institutions includes:

1. General education courses in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences required of all university students.

2. Specialized courses in pedagogy and psychology directly related to early childhood and preschool education.

3. Practice-oriented courses and internships (experience of working in kindergartens and preschool centers under the guidance of mentors).

Today, the United States remains one of the most multilingual countries in the world. According to the U. S. Department of Education and the U. S. Department of Health & Human Services [11], more than a third of children in preschool programs come from families where a language other than English is spoken at home. It should be noted that in recent decades, the United States has experienced a significant increase in families speaking a language other than English at home. In preschool programs (pre-K, Head Start), this is reflected in the increasing proportion of dual language learners (DLLs) – children from birth to age 8 who simultaneously learn English and their native language. Therefore, the training of early childhood education specialists in the country under study includes a thorough understanding of bilingual development processes, assessment skills, and pedagogy that supports both languages [11]. And the



facts of cultural diversity in the region have demanded the inclusion of the following courses into preschool teachers' curricula [12]:

- courses of foreign languages (mostly Spanish, in some cases French or Mandarin);
- courses based on methods of teaching children English and other languages (ESL / TESOL methods);
- courses on cultural diversity.

At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education and the U. S. Department of Health & Human Services issued a joint statement promoting support for DLLs: recommendations cover assessment, family engagement, teacher training, and organizational internships [11]. At the same time, specialized organizations – NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children (<https://www.naeyc.org/?locale=en>)), NCELA (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (<https://www.cal.org/projects/ncela/>)) and Head Start – are releasing practical guides and modules for working with young learners, recommending a culturally and linguistically responsive approach, using the child's native language, and working closely with families. At the state level, there are their own recommendations and best practices (e.g., California's collection of guidelines for working with young learners), which leads to variability in the training requirements for specialists [13].

Young DLLs constitute a highly diverse group, representing a variety of languages, countries of origin, family statuses, and cultural backgrounds [14–16]. These important sociocultural differences influence the development of DLLs across all learning domains. However, all DLLs share a common trait: they acquire at least two distinct language systems during a critical and rapid period of linguistic and cognitive development. In the USA over the past few decades, the number of children-DLLs has tripled, and they now account for a quarter of all children under age [17, p. 5].



The Head Start Program (since 1965) is one of the most well-known programs in the United States, working with low-income families with preschool-aged children (ages 2–3 to 5 years) and including projects to assist migrant, seasonal worker, and Native American families [13]. The program provides access to health care and healthy nutrition, financial support, employment assistance, and parent-child learning groups [17]. Since its inception in 1995, the Early Head Start has become a comprehensive program covering child development from the perinatal period to school entry. The program's goals are focused on supporting parenting, emotional bonds between parents and children, and early development. The program is based on an ecological approach: child development depends on a multitude of factors, being part of culture, family, and social dynamics. The Head Start includes home visits to ensure contact between caregivers and parents, and to create continuity between group activities and cognitive development at home, including language acquisition [17].

Today, in the USA, special attention is paid to the formation of skills to support the child's native language along with the acquisition of English, which corresponds to modern psycholinguistic research on the cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural benefits of bilingualism at an early age. Thus, Canadian researcher E. Bialystok [18] proved that bilingualism contributes to the development of executive functions, such as attention control, cognitive flexibility and the ability to switch between tasks. This is explained by the constant need to activate one language system and suppress the other. Further studies [19] confirmed that bilingual children have a higher level of cognitive flexibility, which has a positive effect on learning activities and the formation of problem-solving skills. In turn, studies of phonological sensitivity [20] have shown that bilingual infants perceive and differentiate sounds better than monolingual children. Although they sometimes have a temporary lag in vocabulary in each language, the overall lexical volume is larger. Neuroimaging methods, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalogram (EEG), have shown that bilingualism contributes to greater neuroplasticity of the brain [21]. In the brain of



bilingual children, areas related to attention control and language processing interact more actively, which leads to more effective development of cognitive functions.

Regarding the sociocultural dimension, bilingualism at an early age forms intercultural competence and tolerance. The study by S. Fan, Z. Liberman, B. Keysar and K. Kinzler [22] proved that bilingual children better develop “theory of mind” – the ability to understand the views and emotions of other people, which contributes to the development of empathy and social integration.

Recognizing the reality of multilingualism, many U. S. colleges and universities offer dual programs or a combination of undergraduate degrees in early childhood education and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) – either as a concentration or as a related master’s degree. These programs provide SLA (second language acquisition) theory, early childhood language teaching methodology, and classroom teaching practice. For already certified teachers, there are accelerated programs and certificates in TESOL/ESL (PreK–12) that include clinical hours (i.e. internship hours), which are often required in states with high numbers of ELs (English learners). Teacher education quality assurance agencies (including CAEP (<https://caep.org/>) and local departments of education increasingly require competencies in working with DLLs and embedded experience in multicultural/multilingual classrooms. However, requirements vary significantly among states [14]. When it comes to the required competencies in the context of foreign language training of future preschool educators, they are as follows: linguistic (knowledge of a foreign language at a level sufficient for professional interaction); communicative (the ability to establish contact with children and parents of a foreign language environment); methodological (application of bilingual education strategies in working with preschoolers); sociocultural (understanding of cultural differences and their consideration in the educational process).

Let us consider some examples of foreign language training programs for future preschool educators in the United States. Among them the following:



1. World/Foreign Language Teacher Education programs – prepare students to teach K-12 languages in one or more languages; include methodology, classroom practice, and state certification requirements.

2. TESOL/ESL programs (focus on teaching English as a second/foreign language (both adults and children); often offer separate certificates and master's degrees.

3. Credential/Endorsement and Accelerated Pathways for Native Speakers – for those who already speak the language (including native speakers), there are “expedited” programs or post-BA programs that provide teaching certification in a short period of time. The former programs are designed for students to complete their degree requirements in a shorter time than a traditional program, e.g., a bachelor's degree in three years or less. And the latter ones are for students who have already earned a bachelor's degree and are eager to pursue further education, like a graduate certificate or prerequisites for professional graduate programs.

The above-mentioned programs are integrated into the education system of future early childhood and preschool teachers, e.g., in such U. S. higher education institutions:

- Teachers College, Columbia University (<https://www.tc.columbia.edu/>): M.A. in early childhood education with bilingual extension. It is characterized by strong fieldwork integration, but it has high tuition limits accessibility.

- Bank Street Graduate School of Education (<https://graduate.bankstreet.edu/>): dual language/bilingual early childhood track + TESOL advanced certificate. Its strength lies in practice-based methodology, and challenge – in limited scalability beyond New York.

- University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) (<https://www.ucla.edu/>): TESOL professional certificates and dual-language immersion programs. It provides strong flexibility for in-service teachers, but sometimes it has insufficient focus on early childhood specificity.



- Harvard Graduate School of Education (<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/>): professional courses and research leadership in bilingual/multilingual education. It provides theoretical grounding, but it lacks structured licensure tracks.

- University of Texas at Austin (<https://www.utexas.edu/>): bilingual/ESL certification programs tied to state licensure requirements. It has strong policy alignment, but it is constrained by state-specific frameworks.

- University of Washington (<https://www.washington.edu/>): early childhood & family studies with multilingual options. It is distinguished by the interdisciplinary design, but its challenge is in less standardized TESOL modules.

- Hunter College, the City University of New York (CUNY) (<https://hunter.cuny.edu/>): bilingual early childhood education tracks. It gives a strong community-based approach, but it has a limited international mobility of certification.

Thus, the analysis of educational programs for specialists in the field of early development and preschool education in leading U. S. higher education institutions showed that foreign language training is integrated into the content of professional education and is considered an important component of the formation of intercultural competence of future teachers. This training is distinguished by:

1. Systematicity. In most programs, a foreign language (Spanish, French or Mandarin) is included as a mandatory or elective discipline. It is aimed not only at the formation of speech skills, but also at mastering professional terminology in the field of preschool education.

2. Intercultural component. Programs provide courses that combine language training with the study of cultural traditions of different ethnic groups. This approach helps to form tolerance in students, the ability to build effective interaction with children and their families with different cultural backgrounds.

3. Integration with pedagogical internship. Students have the opportunity to undergo internships in kindergartens and early childhood development centers, where



bilingual or multilingual education programs operate. This allows them to apply language knowledge in real-world settings.

4. Flexibility and variability. The programs provide for the choice of the level of foreign language training depending on the students' previous language experience, which makes the learning process more individualized.

The results obtained confirm that foreign language training in the United States is considered an important means of ensuring professional mobility and competitiveness of future teachers, as well as a necessary tool for effective work in a multicultural and multilingual educational environment.

Conclusions. Taking into consideration the aforementioned, we can conclude that foreign language training for preschool teachers in the United States is considered a crucial component of their professional competence, ensuring successful teaching in a culturally and linguistically diverse environment of the country under study. An analysis of the content and organization of educational programs suggests that key attention is paid to developing practice-oriented communication skills, intercultural sensitivity, and the ability to utilize innovative foreign language teaching methods in the professional sphere.

The practical significance of the identified pedagogical experience lies in the fact that foreign language training for future preschool teachers is integrated into the professional education system, serving not as an isolated activity but as an integral part of specialist training in the USA. This integration fosters the U. S. preschool teachers' readiness to effectively interact with children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds and enhances their competitiveness in the labor market.

As far as the scope for further research is concerned, these findings allow us to consider the American model as a basis for comparative analysis and the adoption of positive practices in modernizing the system of foreign language training for preschool teachers in Ukraine. The implementation of adapted methodological solutions can



contribute to improving the quality of training specialists, ensuring their professional mobility and successful integration into the international educational space.

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