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## **Discursive Approach and Narrative in the Communicative Training of Future Preschool Education Specialists in the USA**

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**Abstract.** *The article aims to theoretically substantiate the discursive potential of language as a methodological basis for the communicative training of future preschool education specialists in the U.S. higher education system and to determine the role of narrative as a pedagogical tool for the formation of their communicative self-efficacy. Methods.* *The research is based on theoretical analysis, synthesis, and generalization of scholarly literature in pedagogy, linguistics, discourse theory, and communication studies. A conceptual analysis of the notions of communication, discourse, and narrative was carried out, as well as an interpretation of the U.S. higher education practices in the context of general education and professional teacher preparation. The study applies a sociocultural and discursive approach, which allows communication to be considered as a meaning-making activity embedded in sociocultural interaction. Results.* *It is established that in the U.S. higher education, communicative training of future preschool educators is grounded in the understanding of discourse as an integrative phenomenon combining speech, cognitive, and social*



*activity. Discursive practices contribute to the formation of professional identity, value orientations, and readiness for dialogical interaction in the system “teacher – child – parents – professional community”. Narrative, as a form of written discourse, is shown to possess significant pedagogical potential: it activates reflection, supports self-presentation, organizes experience, and develops argumentation skills. These features directly influence the formation of students’ communicative self-efficacy. **Conclusions.** The integration of discursive and narrative approaches ensures the transition from formal language mastery to the development of future preschool educators as subjects of professional communication capable of meaning-making, dialogue, and humanistically oriented interaction, which is essential for the quality of preschool education.*

**Keywords:** *discourse, communicative training, future preschool specialists, narrative, communicative self-efficacy, pedagogical interaction, professional identity, U S higher education.*

## **Дискурсивний підхід і наратив у комунікативній підготовці майбутніх фахівців дошкільної галузі в США**

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**Анотація.** *Мета статті* полягає в теоретичному обґрунтуванні дискурсивного потенціалу мови як методологічної основи комунікативної підготовки майбутніх фахівців дошкільної галузі в системі вищої освіти США та визначенні ролі наративу як педагогічного інструменту формування їхньої



комунікативної самоефективності. **Методи.** Дослідження базується на теоретичному аналізі, синтезі й узагальненні наукових джерел із педагогіки, лінгвістики, теорії дискурсу та комунікації. Здійснено концептуальний аналіз понять «комунікація», «дискурс» і «нарратив», а також інтерпретацію практик вищої освіти США в контексті загальної та фахової підготовки майбутніх педагогів дошкільця. У роботі застосовано соціокультурний і дискурсивний підходи, що дозволяють розглядати комунікацію як смислотворчу діяльність, занурену в соціокультурну взаємодію. **Результати.** Встановлено, що - комунікативна підготовка майбутніх фахівців дошкільньої галузі у США базується на розумінні дискурсу як інтегративного феномена, що поєднує мовленнєву, когнітивну та соціальну активність. Дискурсивні практики сприяють формуванню професійної ідентичності, ціннісних орієнтацій і готовності до діалогічної взаємодії в системі «педагог – дитина – батьки – професійна спільнота». Зазначено, що нарратив як форма письмового дискурсу має значний педагогічний потенціал: він активізує рефлексію, підтримує самопрезентацію, структурує досвід і розвиває аргументаційні вміння. Ці властивості безпосередньо впливають на формування комунікативної самоефективності студентів. **Висновки.** Інтеграція дискурсивного та нарративного підходів забезпечує перехід від формального оволодіння мовленням до становлення майбутніх фахівців дошкільньої галузі як суб'єктів професійної комунікації, здатних до смислотворення, діалогу та гуманістично орієнтованої взаємодії, що є необхідною умовою підвищення якості дошкільньої освіти.

**Ключові слова:** дискурс, комунікативна підготовка, майбутні фахівці дошкільньої галузі, нарратив, комунікативна самоефективність, педагогічна взаємодія, професійна ідентичність, вища освіта США.

**Introduction.** In the modern educational environment, characterized by the strengthening of humanistic orientations, intercultural interaction and the growing role of social communication, the professional training of future specialists in preschool



education is increasingly viewed through the prism of the linguistic and communicative dimension. This is especially relevant in the U. S. higher education system, where communication is recognized not only as a universal competence, but also as a system-forming component of the general training of education seekers, regardless of specialty. For a future preschool teacher, communicative ability is not auxiliary, but professionally defining, since it is through speech interaction that the educational process is implemented, the educational environment is formed and a partnership with the child, parents and the professional community is built.

Theoretical understanding of communication in modern science is increasingly associated with the concept of discourse, which allows us to go beyond the instrumental understanding of speech as the transmission of information and interpret it as a sociocultural, cognitive and personally significant activity of creating meanings. In this approach, speech appears as a space for interaction between subjects, in which identity, values, ways of understanding the world and “the Other” are constructed. This is of fundamental importance for the preparation of future educators, because their professional activity is based on constant dialogical contact with the child as a full-fledged subject of communication. In this context, the need for theoretical substantiation of the discursive potential of language as a methodological basis for communicative training of future preschool education specialists in the USA and clarification of the role of narrative as a means of developing their communicative self-efficacy is becoming more urgent.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Modern research in pedagogy, linguistics, and communication theory demonstrates a clear shift from the instrumental interpretation of language toward its understanding as a discursive, sociocultural, and cognitive practice. Communication is increasingly viewed not as the transmission of ready-made information, but as a process of joint meaning-making, within which identity, values, and social relations are constructed. Such an approach is of direct importance for the professional training of future preschool specialists, whose activity



is fundamentally based on interaction, dialogue, and interpretation of the child's experience.

The methodological foundations of this paradigm are reflected in the works of J. Peters [1], who considers communication an integrative element of general education in U.S. higher education, ensuring cultural coherence and social integration of the individual. Similar positions are substantiated in the studies of S. Fedorenko [2], who proves that communication in U.S. higher education has a pronounced value-semantic character and acts as a factor in the formation of students' humanitarian culture. In further research, the scholar emphasizes the methodological role of pedagogical discourse in shaping the personal and professional qualities of future specialists [3].

The theoretical grounding of the discursive approach is further developed in linguistics and social theory. L. Onuchak [4] defines discourse as an interdisciplinary phenomenon linked with cognitive and pragmatic mechanisms of speech activity. Within critical discourse analysis, N. Fairclough [5] substantiates the dialectical relationship between language and social practice, while J. Raelin [6] emphasizes the "return of practice" to higher education, highlighting learning through participation in real communicative and professional interactions. These ideas are particularly relevant for teacher education, where professional competence emerges through situated communication. From a philosophical perspective, P. Ricoeur [7] interprets discourse as a space where self-understanding and understanding of the Other intersect, reinforcing its pedagogical significance.

A sociocognitive dimension of discourse is elaborated in the works of T. Van Dijk [8], who situates communicative acts within specific social contexts shaped by shared knowledge, values, and group representations. This view aligns with contemporary approaches that conceptualize communication as co-constructed meaning. In a similar vein, the Mary Lou Fulton Presidential Professor of Literacy Studies, Regents' Professor at Arizona State University and a member of the U. S. National Academy of Education J. Gee [9] argues that language always functions within socially recognizable "discourses" that integrate ways of speaking, acting,



valuing, and being, thus linking communication directly with identity formation and participation in social practices.

Within the field of teacher preparation, a number of scholars underline the decisive role of communicative competence for professional activity. The formation of communicative competence in U. S. higher education is analyzed by N. Myropolska and S. Fedorenko [10], who stress its integrative nature and its connection with reflection, cultural awareness, and readiness for dialogue. At the same time, communicative competence in these studies is interpreted mainly within the competence-based paradigm, which actualizes the need to conceptualize it more deeply through the prism of discourse.

S. Kopp and N. Krämer [11] highlights the importance of recognizing the Other as a subject of interaction in the formation of humanistic and dialogical pedagogical positions. These conclusions resonate with research in early childhood education, where dialogic interaction is seen as a key factor in both teacher effectiveness and children's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

Thus, recent research consistently supports the understanding of communication as a discursive, socially embedded, and identity-forming process. At the same time, the integration of these theoretical perspectives into a coherent model of communicative training for future preschool specialists remains insufficiently systematized, which determines the relevance of further investigation.

**Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem.** Despite a significant number of studies devoted to the problems of professional training of teachers, communicative competence and discursive practices in higher education, a number of aspects remain insufficiently developed.

Firstly, in scholarly works, communicative training of future teachers is often considered mainly within the framework of linguodidactic or competence approaches, while discourse as an integrative phenomenon that combines speech, cognitive and social activities of the individual is not yet sufficiently understood as a methodological basis for professional training of preschool education specialists.



Secondly, although modern pedagogical theory recognizes the importance of dialogic interaction and subject-subject relations, the connection between discursive practices in higher education and the formation of professional speech behavior of a future educator is revealed fragmentarily, without a systematic analysis of their influence on the formation of professional identity and value orientations.

Thirdly, narrative is actively researched in psychology, cultural studies, and pedagogy, but its potential as a means of forming communicative self-efficacy of students of pedagogical specialties has not received sufficient theoretical generalization, especially in the context of training future specialists in preschool education.

Thus, the issue of using discourse and narrative as system-forming factors of the communicative training of future educators and as means of forming their communicative self-efficacy requires further theoretical substantiation, which determines the relevance of this study.

**Formulation of the objectives of article (setting the task).** The purpose of the article is to theoretically substantiate the discursive potential of language as a methodological basis for the communicative training of future preschool education specialists in the U. S. higher education system and to determine the role of narrative as a pedagogical tool for the formation of their communicative self-efficacy. To achieve the set goal, the following tasks are envisaged: 1) to clarify the methodological meaning of the concept “discourse” in the context of linguistic and communicative training of future preschool education specialists; 2) to characterize the specifics of discursive interaction in the professional activity of a teacher in the system “teacher – child – parents – professional community”; 3) to determine the pedagogical potential of narrative as a form of written discourse in forming communicative self-efficacy of students; 4) to substantiate the connection between narrative practices and the formation of communicative self-efficacy of students – future preschool education specialists.



**Presentation of the main research material.** The actualization of the discursive potential of language and communicative training of future preschool specialists in the USA within the general component of higher education is based on the understanding of communication as a multidimensional phenomenon, which, firstly, is the most important channel for transmitting information and knowledge [2], and secondly, is interpreted as a process in which, with the help of symbols, a person's identity, his social connections and relationships, his general world of significant objects and events, his feelings and thoughts, as well as the ways of expressing these socially conditioned realities are formed and improved [12, p. 125]. In modern scientific interpretations, such an understanding of communication is increasingly outlined by the concept of discourse, which is a synthesis of a person's communicative, cognitive and social activity and is manifested in the interaction between communicants [5-7].

Discourse is any statement that is considered as an interaction of the subject, object and addressee, including in the educational process. This interaction is purely mental in nature and can be not only direct and synchronous (oral speech), but also mediated and diachronic (written speech). In this case, the term "discourse" is used doubly: this word denotes both a single event of communication, interaction of consciousness in the form of language; and a stable form of social practice of linguistic behavior, i.e. a certain type of speaking or writing [4]. In both aspects, it is unacceptable to reduce discourse to the transfer of information – a technological process carried out both between people and between a person and a computer and even from a computer program to a program.

The famous Dutch scholar van Dijk [8] treats discourse as a communicative event of sociocultural interaction. This means that any speech takes place in a certain social context and is always related to a specific situation. Discourse includes not only words, but also those who speak and listen, their personal and social characteristics, status, age, profession, level of education, cultural experience, etc. In addition, common knowledge, values and ideas that are generally available to the participants in communication play an important role here. It is thanks to these common meanings



that people are able to correctly interpret statements, understand subtexts, irony, hints or cultural allusions [8]. Thus, discourse does not function in isolation, but within a broader system of social meanings.

French philosopher, professor at the Universities of Strasbourg and Chicago, P. Ricoeur [7] considers discourse as a space of intersection of the processes of self-knowledge and knowledge of the Other in the course of communicative activity, as well as a way of connecting a person with the world, implied in the referential orientation of speech. In this context, communication appears not only as the transmission of information, but as a continuous process of discovering the world and oneself in it [7, p. 36–37]. For the linguistic and communicative training of future preschool education specialists, such an interpretation of discourse is methodologically significant, since the professional activity of the educator is based on constant pedagogical interaction with the child, which involves the ability to understand the other, empathetic listening, interpretation of children's statements and construction of speech taking into account the age and individual characteristics of children.

In this aspect, discourse appears as a pedagogically organized space of speech interaction, within which not only language skills, but also professional value orientations of the future educator are formed. According to researchers S. Kopp and N. Krämer [11], awareness of the significance of “the Other” as a full-fledged subject of communication is a necessary condition for personal and professional self-knowledge, which depends on a clear and honest recognition of the significance of other people in the life of an individual. In the professional context of preschool education, this position directly correlates with the formation of a humanistic pedagogical position and readiness for dialogical interaction with a child. The methodological significance of discourse as a way of mutual understanding and interaction in the system of training students in higher education in the USA lies in the humanization of the educational process and its direction towards the translation and co-creation of meanings between subjects of communication. It is not only about mastering language tools, but also about the ability of future specialists to realize,



interpret and construct pedagogical meanings in the process of professional communication, which ensures the acquisition of socio-cultural experience and contributes to the development of individual communicative solutions [13, p. 245]. In the structure of linguistic and communicative training of future early childhood educators, this corresponds to the value-motivational and conative-activity components that determine readiness for conscious pedagogical communication. Also, in the context of training future preschool education specialists in the USA, discourse acquires special pedagogical significance, since it determines the nature of professional speech, pedagogical interaction and communicative behavior in the system “early childhood educator – child – parents – professional community”. According to J. Peters, a professor at the University of Iowa, Department of Communications, it is communication as a mandatory element of general training in the U. S. higher education that provides a holistic view of culture and society and at the same time acts as an effective factor in their consolidation [1, p. 24], which is fundamentally important for preschool professionals whose professional activities are of a distinctly sociocultural nature.

Ensuring effective interaction of participants in the educational process, discourse serves as the basis for the formation of each student's idiolect as part of professional communicative competence. Idiolect is understood as an individually formed complex of linguistic and rhetorical skills determined by sociocultural, psychophysical and professional factors, which is manifested in oral and written pedagogical communication [3]. For future preschool education specialists, the formed idiolect determines the individual style of pedagogical speech, intonational expressiveness, accessibility of explanation, speech support of children's initiative and the creation of a positive communicative climate in the group.

We consider it appropriate to dwell in more detail on such a widespread form of written communication in the practice of higher education in the USA as narrative, since it has significant potential for forming students' communicative self-efficacy –



their confidence in their own ability to effectively express thoughts, interpret experience, build meanings and interact with others.

Students' writing of stories (Lat. *narrare* – to tell; Lat. *gnarus* – to know) – narratives – actualizes their personal experience through critical analysis of events and actions (their own and other people). In this process, students not only comprehend their own experience and the experience of others, but also acquire the skills of verbal self-presentation, argumentation, reflective analysis and interpretation, which are important components of their communicative self-efficacy. According to J. Bruner, narrative is characterized by reflexivity and cultural creation – “imitating life” [14, p. 11]. This type of narrative is a complex of linguistic and psychological structures that are transmitted culturally and historically and are limited by the level of skill of each individual in the use of his or her socio-communicative abilities [15, p. 30]. That is why, as J. Bruner [15] argues, students need to be taught the rules of narrative construction, because this contributes not only to the development of speech skills, but also to the formation of confidence in one's own ability to communicate. The following components of narrative are distinguished: summary – a brief summary of what will be discussed; indication of the time, place and situation of the events being described, observing the sequence, as well as the behavioral characteristics of the actors; critical assessment of situations, actions and deeds; conclusion of a reflective nature. Mastering the specified narrative structure helps students not only organize their own experience, but also confidently build communicative messages, which contributes to the development of their ability to clearly, logically and convincingly convey meanings to the addressee [2].

A narrative is a story about interaction with people who constantly make moral and ethical choices, and with the world around them in general. Narrative stories involve not just a statement of thoughts about a particular event, but also a transfer of attitude to the described. It is this subjective position of the speaker that contributes to the development of his communicative agency and self-efficacy, because the student learns to be aware of his own point of view, argue it and correlate it with the positions



of others. At the same time, reflection becomes an integral attribute of narrative as a socio-cultural tool that provides students with self-understanding and complements the system of communicative education by actualizing the cultural, value and worldview meanings of their life activities. In order to comprehend events or actions, the narrative method encourages students to turn to traditional forms (myths, fairy tales, legends, etc.) inherent in their culture, with the help of which they can interconnect events or actions with their causes. According to K. Gergen [16], a narrative contains a certain value-colored final result – a conclusion built on the basis of cause-and-effect relationships. Such a structure contributes to the formation of the ability to argue, explain and interpret events – key components of communicative self-efficacy.

Narrative schemes of students' stories can model stories in which characters act in different life situations, demonstrate certain values and norms of behavior, face the consequences of their decisions and look for ways to overcome difficulties. In this process, the student acts as both the author and the interpreter of his own experience. As J. Bruner notes, the narrator, who is "here and now", takes on the task of describing the actions of the hero "there and then" [14, p. 69], and this process requires personal growth or transformation. It is such a transformation that contributes to increasing confidence in one's own ability to comprehend and verbalize experience, which is the basis of communicative self-efficacy.

Students' narratives serve, on the one hand, as a mechanism for self-identification, self-understanding, and systematization of life experience: each person tells about what happened to him, thus showing who he is [7, p. 112]. In this way, narrative provides a manifestation of personal integrity, autonomy, and creative essence, and also contributes to the formation of confidence in one's own ability to express oneself. On the other hand, narrative stories provide students with resources for self-presentation and act as a component of social interaction that connects them with culture and with other people [10; 15]. It is in this dimension that narrative plays a key role in the development of communicative self-efficacy, since it allows students not only to express themselves, but also to be heard and understood. Narrative best



illustrates the penetration of the ideas of humanistic psychology into the educational process of higher education in the United States. Teachers are interested in how students perceive, understand and explain the events of their own lives. This provides a “narrative knowledge of the world” [17, p. 13], which contributes to the development of a sense of dignity, autonomy and faith in one’s own communicative capabilities. Narrative is both a way of thinking, a form of organizing experience and a means of establishing communicative connections [18]. Read or told to others, it becomes a way to be understood, to build a dialogue and to form confidence in one’s own ability to interact with others. That is why narrative can be considered an important tool for developing students’ communicative self-efficacy in the modern educational environment.

Thus, linguistic and communicative training occupies a system-forming place in the structure of professional education of future early childhood teachers, for whom the communicative component is not optional, but mandatory and basic. Within the humanistic, sociocultural and cognitive paradigms, communication is considered not as an instrumental process of transmitting information, but as a complex form of meaning-making activity that ensures the formation of professional identity, social ties and value orientations. Discourse in this context appears as an integrative phenomenon that combines the speech, cognitive and social activity of the subject and ensures pedagogically significant interaction in the system “teacher – child – parents – professional community”. Narrative acquires special importance in this system as a form of written communication that activates reflection, contributes to the comprehension of experience, the development of self-presentation and the formation of the ability to interpret, argue and dialogical interaction. It is precisely due to these properties that narrative can be considered an effective tool for forming students’ communicative self-efficacy – their confidence in their own ability to construct pedagogical meanings, carry out subject-subject interaction, and implement professional communicative activities in the context of early childhood, which is fundamentally important for the quality of preschool education in general.



**Conclusions.** Therefore, the analysis of the communicative training of future preschool education specialists in the US higher education system shows that it is based on the understanding of communication as a multidimensional socio-cultural and cognitive phenomenon, conceptually understood through the category of discourse. Discourse appears not as a technical process of information exchange, but as a form of meaning-making activity, within which the formation of the professional identity of the future teacher, the formation of his value orientations, ways of interpreting reality and readiness for dialogical interaction takes place. In the structure of the professional training of future educators, discourse performs methodological, formative and humanizing functions: it provides pedagogically significant interaction in the system “teacher – child – parents – professional community”, contributes to the development of the individual idiolect of the future specialist and the formation of his professional style of speech. Through discursive practices, students learn not only to master language tools, but also to construct pedagogical meanings, interpret the position of “the Other”, and reflect on their own communicative activity.

Narratives, as a form of written discourse that integrates speech activity, personal experience, and cultural meanings, acquire special pedagogical significance in this process. Narrative practices contribute to the development of reflexivity, argumentation skills, self-presentation, and interpretation of events, which is directly related to the formation of students' communicative self-efficacy – their confidence in their own ability to effectively interact, express and justify thoughts, and be heard and understood.

Thus, the communicative training in the paradigm of discourse and narrative ensures the transition from formal mastery of speech to the formation of a future teacher as a subject of professional communication capable of meaning-making, dialogue, and humanistically oriented interaction with a child. This determines its system-forming role in the structure of professional education of future preschool specialists and its strategic importance for improving the quality of preschool education in general.



As far as the scope for further research is concerned, the integration of digital and multimodal discursive practices in communicative training represents a promising avenue for research. Investigating how digital tools, virtual interactions, and multimedia narratives impact the formation of professional style, reflexivity, and dialogical skills could offer practical insights for modernizing teacher education programs.

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