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## The Use of Narrative as a Speech Behaviour Model

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**Abstract:**

*The authors of this paper view narrative as a way for a human to express his or her attitude to the world, finding its presence virtually in every aspect of human relations. Revealing the essence of a narrative approach, the authors refer to the works by J. Brockmeier, R. Harré, A. Schütz, J.F. Lyotard, J. Bruner who analyzed the essence of narrative in their studies. The structure, characteristics, forms and functions of narrative as a type of discursive reality are analyzed. Particular attention is paid to personal narrative as a way to reflect acquired experience. The authors underline the use of narrative techniques in many knowledge areas: psychology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, and psychiatry. Analyzing pedagogical aspects of narrative, the authors mention the use of metaphors as a means of influencing the audience. The authors pay a special attention to the practicability of narrative teaching methods, namely a narrative game as one of the methods of active learning in an educational process.*

**Key Words:** *narrative, narrative approach, speech behavior model, personal narrative, metaphors, narrative game.*

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## **Introduction**

To describe the attitude of a human towards the world, a subject uses various language forms which reveal inner reasons of his or her behavior. This is the unique character of relationships between a human and the world according to philosophical tradition today. “Personal being” includes social and individual practices in which human arguments about his or her actions, beliefs and desires are reflected.

Narrative (in English and French *narrative* – a story-telling; in Latin *narrare* – to tell) refers to the concept characteristic for the postmodern philosophy, establishing a self-sentiment as a text being. The term “narrative” is borrowed from the historiography where it emerged within the context of conception “narrative history” which explains the sense of a historical event not as a naturally determined story but as a sense arising in the context of narration about the event and immanently connected with its interpretation.

## **Narrative approach in modern social sciences**

“A narrative turn” in social sciences took place in the 80-s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the point of view of a “narrative turn”, it is possible to understand the functioning of different forms of knowledge if to view them from a narrative perspective and with realization of significance of narrative in the life of a human [5].

In 1905 a philosopher L. Shestov wrote: “If a human found the words to express his attitude to the world, he has a right to speak and he can be listened to, and his attitude is unique which we never met before and it will never occur again”. L. Shestov criticized natural-science methodology and stated: “Only alternating events are worth the attention of science, these events may be created artificially, if desired, missing a huge amount of single facts. Referring to narrative, we realize that 'single events tell us a lot more than constantly recurring ones'” [9].

Narrative in philosophy is interpreted as a way for a human to acquire his identity. In a narrative a story-teller “objectifies his own subjectivity”. Narrative is not only a means of self-identification but also a way to reach certain social aims. Today narrative is in the spotlight of narratology, social and humanitarian and natural sciences.

Specialists in the narratology (J.M. Adam, G. Genette, Th. Pavel, Sh. Rimmon-Kenan, G. Prince etc.) explain the number of “narrative” studies by the fact that narration in the life of people is becoming more important. Disregarding material and symbolic ways, people are communication verbally. A linguistic product, or discourse is the result of this communication. The results of the study include not only literary texts and everyday language but a scientific discourse as well: “musicology” (E. Nuke), literary texts (W. Steiner) and film studies (K. Metz) analyze composition and representation; cultural studies study the ways for

obtaining legitimation by the authorities through narrative (F. Jameson); in psychology, narratology explanatory schemes are used for studying the memory and cognition (N. Sten, K. Glenn); philosophy and sociology study conventions of narrative to define a rhetorical nature of scientific texts (R. Rorty, E. Gross).

Narrative approach in social sciences today implies the presence of stories in all the areas of human relationships despite certain functional differences: - in psychology narrative helps to understand the identity; in history narratives give a sense to the past; in psychological analysis this is the material for analyzing things; in philosophy narratives are the base for forming a new vision of the world and organizing communities [13]; in sociology narratives combine all the characteristics of a good methodology – narrative approach in modern social sciences implies a universal character for telling the “stories” [12]. It means that narrative serves as a form of a human behavior or other social actions which occur under certain conditions and are oriented towards the others.

A narrative approach is based on the existence of the main form of a human experience as certain situations (stories) directly influencing the life.

J. Brockmeier and R. Harré revealed the essence of a “narrative turn” and stated: “Narrative, in its universally accepted and general sense, is a name for some ensemble of linguistic and psychological structures, culturally and historically transferred, and restricted by the level of skills of each individual and by the combination of his or her social and communicative abilities with linguistic skills” [2].

A. Schütz expressed his opinion that social reality in which an individual lives, must have a sense, characteristic only for this very reality and must be clearly structured for the members of a certain social society. “Logically interpreting social reality on the level of a mundane consciousness, they as though select and explain their world in advance, which is later perceived as a reality of everyday life. These are the mentality objects that determine behavior through its motivation. The models of mentality objects created by a researcher who strives to understand the social reality must comply with the mentality objects existing in the everyday consciousness of people living in their environment” [10].

J.F. Lyotard wrote that “... while narrative seems ... a certain linguistic and cognitive essence, it must be regarded as a condensed number of rules including only the things approved and successfully working within the given system” [5, p. 72].

Analyzing the studies of an American psychologist J. Bruner, we can see modern interpretation of narrative. In his study “Real perception, possible worlds”, the author mentions narrative alongside pragmatic logical and scientific type of mind. His narrative is based on the description of realities and is a natural way for a human

to perceive the world [11].

### **Narrative in social and humanitarian perception**

Narrative is a socially formed stable speech behavior model for transforming information about social experience of the generations. In this sense, narrative is a universal characteristic typical for the majority of cultures.

From the point of view of psychological anthropology, culture is an integral system based on behavioral criteria. An activity principle behind the interpretation of the notion “culture” confirms that narrative is a form of speech behavior stereotype.

Two major alternatives in interpreting narrative in social and humanitarian perception are distinguished: in a broad sense narrative is any written or oral narration; in a narrow sense it is a scheme of experience organization with certain elements. One can often notice that a word “narrative” is used as a synonym to the words “story” or “history”.

Narrative, narration or story-telling is a special formation on the level of a discourse, namely those figures of speech that are similar to a metaphor but creating an effect of semantic innovation on the level of whole sentences but not individual words unlike a metaphor.

According to the logic of Ricker who gives a broader meaning to narrative unlike linguistic and literature theories (A.J. Greimas and Russian formalists), giving narrative qualitative characteristics of an artistic work, this notion serves as a fundamental human experience.

Narrations are recollections of a man. Human action acquires sense only in the presence of a number of utterances about these recollections, consequently, narrative is created. Communication event plays a role of a subject of narration when the participants tell about it some time later. Besides, narration is able to place separate discrete elements of the acquired experience in a proper non-linear semantic order. The description of the events by a story-teller is based on his or her personal narration logic but not according to the chronological sequence of events.

### **Narrative characteristics**

At the base of the forms of a human perception, in the opinion of the narrative approach theorists, are cognition schemes having the following functions: the function of representing a certain sphere of reality and the function of conversing the data of this reality. A narrative scheme creates the models of:

- Characters of the story who found themselves in a certain life situation;
- Their positive and negative values;
- Expected intentions of the characters and corresponding plans of their realization;

- Possible consequences as a result of plans and intentions realization;
- Conditions and opportunities to overcome the obstacles occurring during realization of plans and intentions.

Narrative building is based on the logics of a narrator who structures the events according to their significance to the story. Consequently, narrative is a notional configuration of the events and actions and at the same time a representation of events and actions realized within the experience. Collective social experience is the base for forming an individual world-view of a particular linguistic identity. Narrative text often serve as a repository for such experience. Under the influence of subjective cognitive and psychoemotional processes, acquired experience is fully or partially improved in the result of its adaptation to the reality.

In this sense, narrative is a socially standardized universal speech behavior model including the knowledge of key cultural narrations which lay behind the language and traditions, ability to recognize and build texts of various genres which have generic reference to the narrative discourse. In a narrative, as in a product of speech cognitive activity, personally and situationally significant fragments of the linguistic view of the world are reflected and produced.

Narrative is well-established in a cultural practice of the society not only as a cultural and cognitive event having communicative and orienting function (social interaction and experience transfer) but also as a cultural sign, a way to code significant elements of ethnocultural perception. Due to this, narrative is more often interpreted as a complex philological and philosophical category.

General principles of a linguistic text analysis imply its assessment as a language product, interpretation and practices, i.e. initial combination of the reality with the problems of its language exploration – a “real world” is mainly build on the language norms of a given society [3, p. 95]. In linguistic studies, narrative is defined as “one of the ways to represent past experience with the help of sentence sequential which show the time sequence of the events ... narratives function as equivalents of individual speech acts such as an answer, request, complaint etc.” [4]. Narrative has obligatory linguistic signs: 1 – inclusion of subordinate clauses corresponding to the chronology of the events; 2 – use of the past tense in narration; 3 – presence of certain structural components: location (place and time of action, introduction of the characters), a conflict, evaluation of the situation including the author's attitude to the story, settlement of a conflict and variants of the story ending with its reference to the present times.

A significant characteristic of narrative is its temporal nature. Narrative helps to fix temporary events, explain the sense and consequences of one group of events for the other group. Correlation of events sequence in time offers the opportunity to interpret and transform meanings and implications. Analysis of narratives covers all the dimensions of a social reality: from an individual level of arranging and

interpreting life experience to the level of social cooperation (interrelation of social stories).

### **Narrative functions**

Researchers have not reached consensus considering the functions of narrative. They distinguish arranging, informative, convincing, entertaining, distracting, transforming and temporal functions. Narrative transforming function is in creating a model of rewriting the reality, underlining only one group of events and setting aside the other group. Bringing consistency, completeness and vividness, narrative gives more information than it is necessary to convey the meaning. As a result, individual events acquire structural connection.

Temporal function of narrative means that narrative brings in “human” meanings and allows to understand chronological sequences, picking out different moments in time and establishing connection between them, namely giving a hint about the final at the very beginning of a story. Time in narrative has double function. It is “one of the ways of representation (a language) and it constitutes a represented object (events of a story)”, and it includes three aspects – order (when?), duration (how long?) and frequency (how often?) [12, p. 528].

Narrative (a story, a tale, a myth etc.) serves as one of the types of discursive reality and may have several functions:

- it models behavior when solving various practical tasks such as comparing, defining attitude to something, classification, opposition, reassignment etc.;
- it forms ideas, intentions, experience in a certain discursive order;
- it expresses some instructions and norms in different communication practices, arranges and gives sense to the experiences, gives knowledge, forms the procedures for apologies or excuses etc.;
- it subjectivises the world making a human open for the sphere of prospectives forming a real life of consciousness being interpreted;
- it can make a human open and flexible [2, p. 30].

### **Personal narrative**

The type of a story-teller (narrator) defines a narrative form. In a traditional narrative, narration is in the third person. This form of narration gives a story-teller an opportunity to distract from the described events and present the objective view of the world.

This form of narration is opposed to the narration in the first person. In this case, a narrator is one of the characters. He presents a narrative reality through his perceptions, feelings, views and opinions, he himself belongs to this reality. This is a personal narrative.

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Both in traditional and in personal narrative, a narrator (a sender of the message) and a narratee (a receiver of the message) are essential subjects. Their belonging to the real world and events, which actually took place or which are just described, is a prerequisite for transforming a message from an author to the readers or the audience. The author of the narrative, however, can introduce a conventional storyteller into his story. Thus, the existence of two subjects is possible, a narrator and narratee, both inside and outside a narrative reality created by the author.

The main characteristic of any narrative is its structural integrity and self-sufficiency, permanent message interpretation by the receiver. Such structures and elements of a linguistic reality as genre, scenario, point of view, storyline and voice are not flexible and fixed. Here, intonation is more important which allows “to hear sometimes something more, something closer to the truth than the words” [1, p. 588] and significance which is given to this or that statement may be defined by the mimic or intonation.

Such stories, enriched with non-verbal mimic, gestures, and position, may be interpreted differently, creating ideological environment (plural and tolerant, according to Bakhtin) [1, p. 211].

Personal narrative is narration of a man who does not only give his personal assessment to the reality but who is the part of this reality. Using generally accepted terms, a personal narrative is narration about “the world-with-me” [7, pp. 66-81].

Personal narrative, unlike traditional narrative, is most often retrospective as at the moment of events all the participants are not able to describe their acts, feelings and thoughts simultaneously. Personal narrative is a way of reflexion of the acquired experience and creating an autobiography.

The role of a story about oneself in the life of a person is that it allows to compare your past behavior and your self-perception in the future having understanding about yourself now. It gives the feeling of integrity and consistency of one's self [14, p. 285].

The audience or narratee plays a very important role in a personal narrative. It has a unique characteristic – having something in common with the narrator in the communicative space, and knowledge of the context of the events. Due to a personal narrative, a narrator and a narratee are presented as acquaintances who met each other before and it gives the opportunity to describe events without going into details of the background.

A crucial factor in using narrative structures is awareness of the addressant of the final of the story. When using the narrative, there is an opportunity to recognize an individual experience and feelings of a person with reference to the functioning ways of psychological and emotional characteristics of an individual consciousness

as a part of the integrated view of the world. The level of subject socialization is connected with a certain degree of his or her language competence, the basis of which is the ability of an individual to articulate his or her thoughts in a verbal form using certain means of language.

### **Narrative practices**

At the moment, we can face narrative sources virtually in all knowledge areas: psychology, sociology, philology, philosophy, psychiatry and even education. Philological studies, linguistics and literature studies, pay a lot of attention to the narrative techniques. According to J. Brockmeier and R. Harré, narrative is an instruction for making stories. If you know certain linguistic, psychological and cultural constructions, it is possible to create an exciting narration in which the mood and message of the narrator are presented.

In diplomacy, narration is equal to intended deception and concealing the true intentions. Narration implies concealing some of the facts and true intentions, as a variant – substitution of a thesis and the use of euphemisms in order to make a text more harmonious and to avoid mentioning the facts.

Narrative approach is one of the most dynamically developing trends in psychotherapy and psychological consulting. Narrative ideas and methods are applied in various spheres: individual consulting, work with families, in schools, reconciliation programs for teenagers and adults, rehabilitation work with the victims of violation or emergency situations. The aim of a narrative therapy is to help people to see experience which does not correspond to the problem, to open new alternatives to them and reveal new skills, to create the story about one's self from the events which were ignored before. There are more and more fields where narrative methods are used.

### **Pedagogical aspects of narrative**

Studying various aspects of narrative from philosophical and psychological point of view, researches do not pay enough attention to the pedagogical aspects.

Today education faced the task not only to transfer the knowledge but to actualize personal and social experience corresponding to the knowledge. We think that these tasks can be solved by the narrative methods of teaching.

In a broad sense, narrative is a narration as a process of creating and analyzing tales, stories, and descriptions. What is important for a narrative education is that education and training process is based on the stories which the students analyze and associate with themselves. As a result, their own life experience is actualized.

Narrative gives a role to the subject of communication. In any narrative, the act of

speaking corresponds to: 1) the communicative action; 2) communication; 3) reflexion. A narration act serves to express the attitude to the story, to have an impact on the emotions, on the position of the listener. The listener develops his or her own attitude, only if information in the story makes him to take his position. In this case, reflexion becomes an essential component of narrative, adding to communicative forms of education and training.

D. Boyle argues correctly that “explanation” is an important characteristic of narrative. The significance of “explanatory power” as a constitutive characteristic of narrative is also underlined by J. Velleman who thinks that it can be characterized as an explanatory genre. “Narrative does not just describe events but makes them easy to understand systematizing casual relationships” [15].

Narrative schemes influence the ability of a person to remember, understand and use the acquired knowledge in behavior. They serve as a major form of representing knowledge about the events and subjects of the social life. If questions important for a trainee are interpreted with the help of narrative, an individual wants to adapt his or her intentions, plans, solutions and even feelings to the structure of the evolving story. Consequently, narrative can form the behavior of a trainee, actualize personal and social experience by referring to the stories comparing to transferring the knowledge as an abstract description.

### **Metaphors in narrative**

The author of a narrative may use in his speech metaphors and so called “life notions” as a means of influencing the audience. A metaphorical language is the language which defines and constructs the world. A scientist M.K. Mamardashvili underlines a special role of a metaphor and argues that: “A metaphor in a strange way can explain something. Strange, because a metaphor itself is obscure. Understandable is only what a metaphor explains. Something, that we keep on the level of a mystery, turns out to be a fundamental condition for understanding other things, but in a strict sense, it remains obscure” [6, p. 5].

We can distinguish a number of functions of a metaphor in organizing an educational process:

- nominative which is introduction of a “study subject” into a cultural and linguistic context;
- cognitive as an expansion of object properties important for a subject;
- decorative is a figurativeness of speech;
- evaluative;
- axiological.

Metaphorical speech of an educator helps to clearly depict the sense of the events, to demonstrate the direction of the events and actions. A metaphor is a very powerful tool which allows to catch the essence of the idea and event without any decoding

unlike a science term.

### **A narrative game as a method of active learning**

Among the most wide-spread methods of active learning is a narrative game which is a dynamic simplified model of the reality and it is based on life situations. In a narrative game, the students find themselves in certain game situations, each has his or her own point of view, beliefs and different social attitudes.

To arrange a team work, the following are necessary: to find out the skills and abilities of the participants and to direct their reflexion and analysis towards a productive intercommunication. In a narrative game, the students can have a first-hand experience of various situations and receive emotional experience, awakening interest in the problem. A narrative game can provide motivation for further learning. Following their own emotions and feelings, a student will act as he or she thinks right but not as the teachers expect him to act.

Generalizing this, we should note that including today the narrative methods of teaching having a great pedagogical potential, is a prospective tendency in educational and training process.

Narrative methods are used in many sciences studying the nature of a human being and the world he lives in. It is impossible to isolate narratives from the subjective personality assessment as an individual is inseparable from the society, in which an individual experience, opinion and a subjective view of the world are formed.

### **Conclusion**

Due to narrative or narration, people give a form and sense to the practices, temporally and logically arrange their experience, distinguishing the beginning, the middle and the end as well as the central theme. Narratives are widely spread as a mechanism of arranging a human experience; they are local due to historical reasons and have social and pragmatic potential[5].

Thus, narrative is a structured logical narration in which an individual perception of the reality is reflected and which is a way of arranging a subjective experience, an effort to self-identification and self-presentation of an individual.

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