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EXPLORING NARRATIVE COMPETENCE AS A PREDICTOR OF CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN SENIOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: RESULTS OF A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract. The article presents the results of a qualitative content analysis of narrative competence and creative abilities in senior preschool children. Narrative competence is considered as an integrative indicator of cognitive and creative development. The empirical study was conducted with a sample of senior preschoolers using a комплекс of narrative and creative diagnostic methods. Special attention is paid to the analysis of verbal and non-verbal task performance, typical activity strategies, and differences in the manifestation of creativity. The findings reveal an uneven development of verbal and non-verbal forms of creativity and confirm the high diagnostic potential of narrative methods in the study of creative development in preschool children. The study emphasizes the importance of qualitative analysis as an essential component of comprehensive psychological and pedagogical assessment.

Keywords. narrative competence, creative abilities, preschool age, creativity, qualitative analysis, developmental assessment.

Introduction. The problem of developing creative abilities in preschool children occupies an important place in contemporary psychological and pedagogical research. Preschool age is considered a key stage of development during which imagination, speech skills, and the ability to comprehend events develop particularly actively. In this context, the study of narrative competence is of special interest, as it reflects a child's ability to meaningfully structure experience, organize a sequence of events, and express content in the form of a coherent story.

Research literature emphasizes that narrative activity is not only a form of speech behavior but also a means of cognitively organizing experience. At the same time, empirical studies devoted to diagnosing preschool children's creative abilities are predominantly based on quantitative approaches, while qualitative analysis of task performance is used to a limited extent. This significantly reduces the possibilities for



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interpreting the individual characteristics of children's activity. Therefore, conducting a qualitative content analysis of the results obtained from narrative and creative assessment methods becomes particularly relevant, as it allows the identification of specific verbal and nonverbal manifestations of creativity in preschool children.

The aim of this article is to analyze the characteristics of narrative competence and creative abilities of preschool children based on a qualitative analysis of the results of diagnostic methods.

Within the cognitive-psychological approach, narrative is considered a universal way of organizing human experience. J. Bruner emphasized that the narrative mode of thinking enables individuals to assign meaning to events, establish causal relationships, and form a holistic understanding of what is happening [1]. According to the author, narrative is not merely a means of transmitting information but also a form of interpreting reality.

In the cultural-historical theory of L. S. Vygotsky, speech is viewed as a key mechanism in the development of higher mental functions. Storytelling in preschool age represents a complex form of speech activity that requires coordination of thinking, memory, imagination, and emotional processes [2]. Thus, narrative competence reflects the level of integration of various psychological processes.

Research in the psychology of creativity shows that creative abilities have a multidimensional nature and may manifest themselves both verbally and nonverbally. E. Torrance identified such indicators of creativity as originality, flexibility, and fluency, emphasizing that their expression may vary significantly depending on the form of activity [3]. A similar position is held by Russian researchers who note the uneven development of verbal and visual creativity in preschool age [4; 5].

Thus, narrative competence can be considered an integrative indicator that makes it possible to assess the level of a child's creative development.

Methodology and Research Methods. The study was conducted at State Preschool Educational Institution No. 97 in Tashkent. Approximately 50 children of senior preschool age (5–6 years old) participated in the study.

A set of psychological and pedagogical diagnostic methods was used, including:

- methods for assessing narrative competence ("Three Stories", retelling of a familiar story, and the method "Invent the Ending of a Fairy Tale");
- methods for diagnosing creative abilities (verbal and figural forms of the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, the "Incomplete Drawing" method, and projective tasks).

Qualitative content analysis was used to process the results. This approach makes it possible not only to count the number of completed tasks or correct responses but also to analyze their content, structure, and specific characteristics of children's activity. Such an approach allows researchers to identify how children construct their stories, what details they use, how elaborated their plots are, and how imagination and originality manifest themselves in drawings. Qualitative analysis also helps to understand individual strategies for solving tasks, peculiarities of thinking, and the level of creative initiative, which cannot be adequately assessed using quantitative indicators alone.



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The qualitative analysis showed that when performing tasks requiring independent storytelling, most children demonstrated a tendency to minimize their utterances. Their stories often took the form of simple listings without detailed descriptions of actions, characters' states, or connections between events.

For example, when working with a series of plot pictures reflecting the sequence of everyday actions of a character, children limited themselves to short statements consisting of only a few words ("woke up," "washed," "got dressed," "eating"). At the same time, visually presented details and the logical sequence of events were almost not reflected in their speech. This indicates insufficient development of narrative structure and limited ability to expand utterances meaningfully.

The results of the method "Invent the Ending of a Fairy Tale" revealed the predominance of a reproductive way of constructing narratives. In the overwhelming majority of cases, children reproduced the standard and well-known ending of the fairy tale without introducing changes to the plot or proposing alternative solutions.

Even when given instructions encouraging them to invent their own endings, children relied on familiar narrative patterns, which indicates a low level of narrative initiative and limited creative transformation of verbal material.

In contrast to narrative tasks, drawing and completion-drawing methods were performed more actively and productively. Most preschoolers demonstrated original images, the use of imaginative elements, and emotional expressiveness in their drawings. For example, in the Torrance Test (figural form) or in E. Tunik's "Creative Drawing" method, most children completed the tasks with interest, invented unusual plots, and depicted unexpected objects. It was immediately noticeable which children possessed more pronounced creative abilities, demonstrating flexibility of thinking and the ability to find unconventional solutions. At the same time, some children experienced difficulties generating ideas and lacked sufficient imagination for independent task performance.

It is important to note that even those children who had difficulties with storytelling often demonstrated a high level of creativity in drawing. This suggests that creative abilities may manifest themselves in different ways — both in speech and in actions — and therefore several diagnostic methods should be used to assess them.

Conclusion. The results of the study showed that the development of narrative competence and creative abilities in preschool children occurs unevenly. Children coped better with creative tasks related to drawing and completion-drawing than with tasks requiring storytelling. Narrative tasks such as "Three Stories" or "Invent the Ending of a Fairy Tale" revealed certain features of story construction: many children used short and simple utterances, did not always maintain the logical sequence of events, and relied on stereotypical plots.

At the same time, creative tasks such as the figural form of the Torrance Test or E. Tunik's "Creative Drawing" method made it possible to identify individual differences in creativity. Children with pronounced creative abilities demonstrated imagination, originality, and the ability to create unexpected images, whereas some experienced difficulties generating ideas. This demonstrates that creativity can manifest itself in



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different forms — verbal and nonverbal — and that limited verbal skills do not necessarily indicate a low level of creativity.

Thus, narrative methods have demonstrated high diagnostic value: they make it possible to assess how well a child is able to independently construct coherent narratives, develop plots, and demonstrate creative initiative. The results emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to diagnosing preschool children's creative abilities that combines both verbal and nonverbal tasks.

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