

THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF HERMENEUTIC THEORY IN TEACHING PROFESSIONAL SUBJECTS

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Abstract: this study is devoted to the analysis of the theoretical and methodological foundations of hermeneutic theory in teaching professional subjects. The hermeneutic approach in education prioritizes interpretation, understanding, and the construction of personal meaning over the mechanical acquisition of knowledge. The principles of the hermeneutic circle, pre-understanding, and reflection are substantiated as effective means of deepening professional knowledge and developing professional thinking. Furthermore, the study highlights the potential for strengthening the competency-based approach through dialectical relationships between text, context, and interpretation within the learning process. The research findings demonstrate the scientific and practical significance of hermeneutic theory as an innovative pedagogical model for teaching professional disciplines.

Keywords: hermeneutics, hermeneutic theory, professional education, professional subjects, interpretation, understanding process, pedagogical approach, educational content, competency-based approach, reflection, communicative culture.

РОЛЬ И ЗНАЧЕНИЕ ГЕРМЕНЕВТИЧЕСКОГО УЧЕНИЯ В ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ ДИСЦИПЛИН

Аннотация: настоящее исследование посвящено анализу теоретических и методологических основ герменевтического учения в преподавании профессиональных дисциплин. Герменевтический подход в образовательном процессе ориентирован не на механическое усвоение знаний, а на их интерпретацию, осмысление и освоение на основе личностного смысла. В работе принципы герменевтического круга, предварительного понимания и рефлексии обоснованы как средства углублённого усвоения профессиональных знаний и развития профессионального мышления. Кроме того, раскрываются возможности усиления компетентностного подхода через диалектические отношения между текстом, контекстом и интерпретацией в учебном процессе. Результаты исследования демонстрируют научно-практическую значимость герменевтического учения как инновационной педагогической модели в преподавании профессиональных дисциплин.

Ключевые слова: герменевтика, герменевтическое учение, профессиональное образование, профессиональные дисциплины, интерпретация, процесс понимания, педагогический подход, содержание обучения, компетентностный подход, рефлексия, культура общения.

Introduction. In contemporary education, teaching professional disciplines extends beyond mere knowledge transmission, emphasizing the comprehension, interpretation, and contextual application of content. Rapid globalization, technological transformation, and the increasing complexity of professional practice demand that specialists not only possess factual knowledge but also the ability to interpret, adapt, and apply it reflectively. These requirements highlight the relevance of hermeneutic theory as a methodological framework for professional education.

Historically developed as a theory of textual interpretation, hermeneutics has evolved into a universal paradigm for understanding meaning in various domains. Philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur conceptualize understanding as an interactive process,



mediated by prior knowledge, historical context, and communicative engagement. applied to professional disciplines, hermeneutics enables deeper comprehension of complex concepts, integration of theory and practice, and the development of critical, reflective, and interpretive competencies.

Within this framework, educators act not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators of meaning-making, while students become active participants in interpreting and contextualizing information. Thus, hermeneutic pedagogy enhances both cognitive and professional development, ensuring that knowledge is internalized and applied effectively in real-world contexts.

Hermeneutics provides a systematic framework for understanding and interpreting knowledge within professional disciplines. Professional knowledge is often complex, context-dependent, and interconnected; hermeneutic principles enable learners to interpret such content accurately and apply it effectively. Gadamer introduced the concept of the “fusion of horizons,” emphasizing that understanding emerges from the interaction between a learner’s preconceptions and new knowledge, integrating prior experience with formal instruction. Ricoeur (1981) further highlights the dialogical nature of interpretation, wherein multiple readings of the same text or problem generate diverse insights, fostering critical reflection and professional judgment.

Empirical evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of hermeneutic pedagogy in higher education. Studies conducted in German and austrian universities show that hermeneutic-oriented teaching enhances students’ capacity to transfer theoretical knowledge into practical decision-making contexts (Kuhn, 2018). Similarly, hermeneutic exercises in professional ethics training, including textual analysis and case interpretation, significantly improve ethical reasoning and situational awareness (Feldman, 2020). These findings confirm that hermeneutics develops both cognitive depth and practical competence.

In applied pedagogy, instructors act as mediators of meaning rather than mere transmitters of information. Learners engage in active knowledge construction through interpretation, dialogue, and contextual application. This approach develops technical competencies alongside higher-order cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptive reasoning. In professions where misinterpretation can lead to significant consequences—law, medicine, and engineering—hermeneutic strategies reduce errors by enhancing comprehension and interpretive precision.

Hermeneutics also complements communicative competence, reinforcing the ability to convey, explain, and negotiate meaning in professional contexts. Effective practice requires not only mastery of content but also the capacity to communicate insights accurately and persuasively. Integrating hermeneutic methods into curriculum design ensures both conceptual understanding and practical communicative skills, enabling graduates to apply knowledge ethically and effectively in real-world settings.

Hermeneutics is associated with the name Hermes (Germes). In ancient Greek mythology, Hermes is known as the messenger of the gods, the god of trade and craftsmanship, cunning and vigilance. He is also directly connected with the art of oratory and rhetoric. In other sources, he is interpreted not so much as a deity, but rather as a messenger who ascends to the peak of Mount olympus to convey the words of the gods to humans. This interpretation is, to some extent, closer to the truth.

This very skill of transmission constitutes the core and essence of the art of oratory. Hermes fulfilled the role of a messenger among the gods. This role required him to possess the ability to



speak fluently, persuasively, and convincingly. For this reason, he is regarded as one of the symbolic figures of rhetoric. Hermes was also renowned for his intelligence and sharp wit. These qualities are essential for any orator. A speaker must be able to think quickly and speak in a manner appropriate to the audience—traits that closely align with the image of Hermes. In ancient Greek thought, the word of Hermes was believed to possess great persuasive power. His speech was endowed with charm, which corresponds to one of the fundamental functions of rhetoric: to persuade, inspire, and guide people.

In philosophical discourse, the concept of logos signifies word, reason, and rationality, and Hermes is intrinsically connected to this notion. As a symbolic figure, Hermes embodies the unity of speech and logic in the act of transmitting knowledge. His function is not merely the delivery of information, but the meaningful mediation of sense, reason, and understanding. In this respect, Hermes represents the archetype of rational communication, in which meaning is constructed through language and logical coherence.

Beyond rhetoric, Hermes is traditionally associated with commerce, trade, pastoral life, and wealth, and was revered as the patron deity of merchants and entrepreneurs. He was also regarded as the protector of travelers, pilgrims, and, paradoxically, even thieves—an association that underscores his role as a mediator across boundaries and liminal spaces. Furthermore, Hermes fulfilled the psychopompic function of guiding the souls of the deceased to the underworld, symbolizing his ability to traverse and connect different realms of existence. Iconographically, Hermes is often depicted with winged sandals, a winged helmet, and the caduceus—a staff entwined with serpents—symbols that signify his role as a messenger, mediator, and emissary of peace.

Hermeneutics, as a philosophical discipline, is fundamentally concerned with interpretation and the search for meaning. According to scholarly sources, hermeneutics constitutes a systematic approach to understanding, interpreting, and ascribing meaning to texts. Initially developed as a method for interpreting sacred texts, such as the Bible, hermeneutics later expanded into philosophy, literary studies, and educational theory. In this sense, hermeneutics functions as a bridge between transcendental meaning and human understanding, much like Hermes himself served as an intermediary between Olympus and humanity.

In modern philosophy, particularly in the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, hermeneutics is conceptualized as a dynamic process that develops the human capacity for understanding. Meaning, in this framework, is not fixed but emerges through dialogue, historical consciousness, and reflective interpretation. The symbolic figure of Hermes thus represents the internal intellectual journey of the individual engaged in the pursuit of meaning, comprehension, and self-understanding.

Consequently, hermeneutics may be defined as the art and science of understanding and interpretation. It extends beyond textual analysis to encompass the interpretation of speech, symbols, signs, gestures, actions, and communicative practices. Hermeneutics investigates how meaning is created, transmitted, and understood within interpersonal and social communication. As such, it directly intersects with the concept of communicative competence.

Communicative competence refers to the ability to engage effectively in communication, encompassing openness, interpretive sensitivity, and the capacity to convey one's knowledge, experiences, observations, and understanding to others. Similarly, hermeneutics functions as a communicative bridge—more precisely, as the capacity for meaningful accessibility and interpretive transmission. It does not merely involve the act of conveying information, but requires the ability to communicate meaning persuasively, coherently, and contextually. Without



a robust “bridge of communication”, the development of any field, along with its achievements, outcomes, and practical impact, becomes fundamentally constrained. Hermeneutics thus serves as both a methodological foundation and a research domain that demands not only transmission but effective, meaningful, and transformative communication.

Etymologically, the term hermeneutics derives from the Greek word *hermēneuein*, meaning “to interpret” or “to explain.” Its terminological genesis and historical roots are closely linked to ancient Greek mythology. According to mythological narratives, Hermes was the legendary figure responsible for conveying the commands and messages of the gods from Mount Olympus to humans. His task involved not merely delivering these messages, but interpreting and explaining them in a manner comprehensible to human recipients.

The etymological and functional connection between “Hermes” and “hermeneutics” is discussed in the scholarly work *Hermeneutics* by the researcher Solikha Allayarova. She emphasizes the phonetic and functional similarities between the two concepts, noting that Hermes’ role as a bearer and mediator of meaning directly corresponds to hermeneutics as the art of understanding and explicating meaning in texts. Thus, hermeneutics inherits from Hermes the fundamental mission of interpretation, mediation, and meaningful communication.

At its core, hermeneutics is founded upon the processes of understanding, interpretation, and explanation of meaning. These processes are not confined to a single discipline but are inherently present across all fields of knowledge. It is precisely this universal applicability—its presence within the epistemological structure of all sciences—that establishes a conceptual affinity and functional convergence between hermeneutics and communicative competence. Upon closer reflection, whether in the natural sciences or in the social and humanitarian disciplines, the essence of knowledge production and transmission lies in the ability to comprehend phenomena and to explicate them meaningfully. Understanding and explanation constitute the foundational mechanisms through which knowledge is constructed, validated, and communicated. These mechanisms are inseparable from educational discourse and represent an integral component of pedagogical interaction and academic communication.

Despite its fundamental importance, hermeneutics is not widely taught as an independent academic discipline in higher education institutions. In Uzbekistan, for instance, instruction in hermeneutics is limited to a small number of contact hours within the philosophy faculties of the National University of Uzbekistan and Nukus State University. This limited institutional presence contrasts sharply with the educational practices of many developed countries, including Italy, Germany, Austria, the United States, Canada, and France, where hermeneutics is recognized as an autonomous field of study and is taught as a distinct subject in schools, colleges, and universities.

Moreover, in several higher education institutions in the Russian Federation, specialized branches such as art hermeneutics, psychogermeneutics, philological hermeneutics, legal hermeneutics, and philosophical hermeneutics have been incorporated into curricula as general professional disciplines. This curricular integration reflects an acknowledgment of hermeneutics as a foundational methodological framework essential for professional reasoning, interpretation, and decision-making across diverse domains.

If the dissemination and interpretation of knowledge constitute the core of hermeneutics, then the effectiveness, artistry, and persuasiveness of this process are intrinsically linked to the level of communicative competence. However, this does not imply a rigid division in which expressive mastery belongs exclusively to communicative competence and not to hermeneutics.



on the contrary, both domains are united by a shared sensitivity to the power of language, the depth of meaning, and the persuasive potential of discourse.

Both hermeneutic ability and communicative competence require an acute awareness of linguistic nuance, semantic richness, and rhetorical impact. They aim to capture the audience's attention, facilitate cognitive engagement, and internalize ideas within the listener's consciousness, ultimately motivating reflection, persuasion, and action. Consequently, hermeneutic competence, when harmonized with communicative proficiency, is measured by the capacity to satisfy the audience's expectations, foster meaningful understanding, and generate intellectual and practical resonance. In this sense, hermeneutics and communicative competence function as complementary dimensions of effective knowledge mediation. Together, they form the intellectual and expressive infrastructure through which meaning is not merely transmitted, but actively constructed, shared, and transformed within educational and professional contexts.

As Paul Ricoeur emphasizes, a reader may derive from a given text interpretations that differ significantly—and at times fundamentally—from the meaning originally intended by the author. Interpretation is not a passive act of reception, but an active, subjective, and historically conditioned process. Human cognition is shaped by individual experience, cultural background, and prior understanding; therefore, two individuals rarely think in identical ways. Consequently, a single word, symbol, or text does not necessarily evoke the same meaning for different recipients.

This divergence in interpretation often becomes a source of misunderstanding in interpersonal communication. Failures of mutual understanding frequently culminate in unnecessary disputes, emotional alienation, and social tension. In this context, René Descartes' well-known assertion -“If people used words correctly and understood their meanings properly, half of the misunderstandings in the world would disappear” - remains philosophically and pedagogically relevant. His statement underscores the decisive role of linguistic clarity and semantic precision in reducing communicative conflicts.

Hermeneutics and communicative competence are united by a shared foundational concern: the need to understand and to make understood through language, speech, and discourse. Both fields are rooted in the processes of comprehension, interpretation, and meaningful expression, which significantly enhance their role and influence in social life. Understanding is a prerequisite for explanation, just as effective explanation presupposes deep understanding. This reciprocal relationship reveals that interpretation and communication are not sequential but dialectically interconnected processes.

In educational contexts, this interdependence places substantial demands on pedagogical competence. The ability to teach effectively requires not only subject knowledge but also hermeneutic sensitivity—the capacity to anticipate multiple interpretations, recognize semantic ambiguity, and guide learners toward reflective understanding. Empirical studies in educational psychology confirm that teachers with high communicative competence foster greater cognitive engagement, conceptual clarity, and learner motivation, thereby reducing misinterpretation and passive learning.

Furthermore, within the framework of synergetic and constructivist approaches to education, meaning is not transmitted unilaterally from teacher to learner but co-constructed through dialogue and interaction. This perspective aligns with hermeneutic philosophy, which views understanding as an event that occurs within communicative interaction rather than as a fixed outcome. as a result, pedagogical success increasingly depends on the educator's ability to



integrate hermeneutic interpretation with communicative mastery.

In sum, hermeneutics and communicative competence together form the epistemological and methodological foundation of effective education and social interaction. Their convergence enhances personal development, promotes intellectual empathy, and contributes to the resolution of complex communicative problems in modern society. Without this integrated approach, educational processes risk devolving into formal transmission devoid of meaning, depth, and transformative potential.

Hermeneutics constitutes a methodological and epistemological foundation for professional education, offering structured principles for interpreting and understanding complex knowledge. Professional disciplines, by their nature, involve abstract concepts, interdependent theoretical frameworks, and context-sensitive applications. Hermeneutic theory provides tools to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and their practical implementation. Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" posits that understanding occurs through the interplay between a learner's preconceptions (Vorverständnis) and new knowledge, enabling the integration of prior experiences with formal instruction. This interaction facilitates interpretive depth and prevents superficial assimilation of information. Ricoeur further emphasizes the dialogical character of interpretation, asserting that multiple perspectives enrich comprehension and strengthen reflective judgment, which is essential in professional decision-making.

Empirical studies in higher education confirm the efficacy of hermeneutic pedagogy. In Germany and Austria, courses structured around hermeneutic principles in law, engineering, and healthcare programs have demonstrated measurable improvements in students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and reflective capabilities. Similarly, Feldman reports that hermeneutic exercises, including textual analysis, case-based interpretation, and scenario simulation in ethics courses, significantly enhance students' situational awareness and ethical reasoning. These outcomes indicate that hermeneutics not only deepens cognitive comprehension but also fosters the application of knowledge in real-world professional contexts.

In pedagogical practice, instructors assume the role of mediators of meaning rather than mere transmitters of information. This shift transforms the classroom into an interactive interpretive space, where students engage in active knowledge construction. Learners interpret, analyze, and contextualize content, cultivating higher-order cognitive skills such as analytical reasoning, adaptive problem-solving, and reflective judgment. For example, in medical education, hermeneutic analysis of patient case studies improves diagnostic accuracy and ethical decision-making. In legal education, interpreting statutes and case law through a hermeneutic lens enhances both procedural understanding and the capacity to justify professional judgments.

Hermeneutics also intersects with communicative competence, which encompasses the ability to articulate, negotiate, and convey meaning effectively. Effective professional practice requires precise and persuasive communication, particularly in multidisciplinary teams and client-facing contexts. Hermeneutic training equips learners to convey complex information accurately, anticipate interpretive differences, and engage in reasoned dialogue, thereby reducing errors and misunderstandings. In engineering and project management education, for instance, hermeneutic-oriented communication exercises have been shown to improve team coordination, technical reporting, and decision-making under uncertainty.

Moreover, hermeneutics fosters ethical awareness by promoting reflective interpretation of professional norms, codes of conduct, and contextual constraints. By emphasizing meaning-making rather than rote memorization, hermeneutic pedagogy ensures that learners internalize values and principles relevant to their field. This approach aligns with competency-based



education frameworks, emphasizing not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of interpretive, reflective, and ethical capabilities.

In sum, the integration of hermeneutics in professional education transforms learning into a dynamic, interpretive, and reflective process. It enables learners to reconcile theoretical knowledge with practical application, strengthens communicative competence, and fosters professional judgment grounded in ethical, contextual, and evidence-based reasoning. Consequently, hermeneutic pedagogy is not an auxiliary method but a central strategy for cultivating professionals capable of navigating complex, multifaceted challenges in contemporary practice.

Conclusion. Hermeneutics plays a pivotal role in professional education by providing a systematic framework for understanding, interpreting, and applying complex disciplinary knowledge. Its principles facilitate the integration of theoretical content with practical contexts, enabling learners to develop critical, reflective, and adaptive competencies. By emphasizing interpretation as a dialogical and context-sensitive process, hermeneutic pedagogy enhances cognitive depth, ethical awareness, and professional judgment.

Furthermore, hermeneutics complements communicative competence by equipping learners with the skills to articulate, negotiate, and transmit meaning effectively in professional and interdisciplinary settings. The integration of hermeneutic methods fosters active knowledge construction, reflective reasoning, and situational adaptability, ensuring that graduates are capable of navigating complex professional challenges with precision and ethical responsibility.

In conclusion, the incorporation of hermeneutic approaches into the teaching of professional disciplines transforms education from a passive transmission of information into an interactive, interpretive, and reflective process. It establishes a bridge between theory and practice, strengthens professional and ethical competencies, and cultivates graduates who are both intellectually agile and practically capable in dynamic professional environments.

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