ACADEMIC DIALOGUE IN THE NARRATIONS OF STUDENTS OF PEDAGOGY IN THE YEARS FROM 2006 TO 2016

ABSTRACT

In this article the author proposes to reflect on the phenomenon of dialogue, indicating its special importance for the process of higher education. The author is interested in academic dialogue, recognizing that changes in the way it is understood and implemented reflect transformation in the higher education system as well as on wider scale – in culture and social life. The question about what understanding of academic dialogue is presented by students I pose in the context of expressed doubts about the situation of higher education in the 21st century (the mass and egalitarian nature of studies, lowering the quality, professionalization and marketization of academic education, weakening academic communities and personal distance of members of the academic community). The author tries to extract and read based on 27 student narratives, which are the material collected during qualitative research (in-depth individual interviews (IDI) with students completing their Master's degree studies: fifteen – in 2006 and twelve – in 2016), the prospects for understanding dialogue and the ways it is understood by successive generations of the youth. The analysis of the obtained narratives of the students led to the conclusion that the dialogue was understood by them from two perspectives that I defined: pragmatic and humanistic, perspectives interpenetrating each other but separable. I established that the dominant perspective – both among students graduating in 2006 and 2016 – was the pragmatic perspective and I brought out the types of understanding of dialogue that fall within its scope. I described the humanistic perspective, which was still clearly present in the statements of the students in 2006 but which disappeared in the statements of 2016. Thinking about the directions of noticed changes in understanding of dialogue, including strengthening of thinking about academic dialogue in terms of effective communication, taking place in a friendly and pleasant atmosphere and reducing expectations of personal dialogue, deepening existential understanding, the author sees confirmation for the thesis that changes in understanding of the academic dialogue reflect changes in understanding of the meaning of studies and the state of personalization / depersonalization of contemporary universities.

Keywords: dialogue, academic dialogue, understanding of dialogue, Polish students of pedagogy, academic community.
INTRODUCTION

For centuries the academic dialogue has been a permanent and constitutive element. It was a standard and condition for high quality education, a feature of academic education. The specific relationship between dialogue and academic education may lead to perceive them in an almost inseparable connection (Horowski, 2009; Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2013; Jankowska, 2017). The perception of academic dialogue in relation to the ongoing process of education (and vice versa: the statement that the process of academic education can be reduced to a broadly understood range of dialogue experiences) is conditioned by the adoption of a humanistic perspective, having its references in different ways of thinking, which is, after all, linked by the assumption that the development of human personality is achieved through dialogue, which is a meaningful and educating experience. This assumption can be found in the thoughts of the dialogues, assuming that the primary experience of a man, which develops self-awareness and identity, is the personal relationship between the Self and personal dialogue (Buber, 1992; Levinas, 2002; Rosenzweig, 1998; Tischner 1990) as well as concepts of the hermeneutical paradigm, perceiving in the man the historical understanding of the individual, striving for self-actualization, shaping and exceeding oneself in the experience of hermeneutical dialogue (Ricoeur 1989, Gadamer, 1993; 1993b (actuality of beauty) 2001; Milerski, 2011). The links between dialogue and education also expose constructivist approaches, indicating that the man is a being who participates in the intersubjective world of meanings and that his development takes place in symbolic interactions, in an engaging dialogue with the sign systems that reach him, leading in consequence to their mutual reading and valorisation (cf. Vygotsky, 1989; Bruner 1964, 1978). The concepts of the critical-emancipation trend, on the other hand, emphasize the special importance of dialogue for the training of critical abilities of the man and his maturing to accept communicative rationality (Habermas, 1999, 2002; Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2006, 2013).

All the above approaches, exposing the role of dialogue in the processes of education, assume that the man remains in a relationship with others in the common and co-created world throughout his life. If he manages to establish dialogue links – he will have a chance to broaden the spheres of his cognition, deepen his understanding of himself and the
surrounding reality. These dialogical bonds are respect and trust towards the adversary, a willingness to listen and understand his position and, at the same time, a courageous presentation of one’s own thoughts, openness to seeking the truth and readiness to verify the views presented (Bińczycka 1985; Tarnowski 1992, Tyburski, 2000; Śnieżyński, 2008). It is worth stressing out that the dialogue takes place in the conditions of discerning an inspiring, perceived in terms of the value, difference in positions, in honest confrontation whose aim is not to push one’s own position but to come closer to the truth. Hence, its natural presence in scientific life, which develops thanks to intellectual tension, born out of a situation where different perceptions of reality come into contact. From the very beginning, the forges of science, which are universities, have been a place of academic disputes and polarization of views (Jaskot, 1984; Goćkowski, 1997; Heller, 2009; Denek, 2013, Sajdak, 2013). Traditionally, academic education has consisted in involving students in the process of dialogue taking place within the university walls. It requires dialogue, because it is not a one-way transmission of knowledge, but it is carried out in a communication that will make knowledge understandable for the recipient and which will open up to deepening, questioning and posing new questions. The dialogue, in order to bring expected results, requires maturity of participants. Traditionally, academic education has consisted in involving the students, who had that maturity, in the process of dialogue taking place within the university walls. Are these traditions still maintained? Is and what dialogue is present in the process of academic education?

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the article is to liberate reflection on the changes in the understanding of the value of dialogue and universities as a place of dialogue by successive generations of young people studying in Poland. The understanding of the value of dialogue by students, their descriptions of its manifestations and forms together with the assessment of its presence within the walls of universities can be considered as indirect indicators of the quality of the academic education process and, more broadly, of the life of academic communities. Does the fact of revolutionary changes in the system of academic education in Poland, which have been taking place for over a dozen years, and which are part of the global directions of development of higher education constitute an answer to wide socio-cultural trends (globalisation and integration, marketization of culture, capitalisation of knowledge and consumerism, media and computerisation, egalitarianism and mass education at the higher level, practicability and professionalization of education) affect the way the dialogue is understood by young people?

The author is particularly interested in how the dialogue is understood by new generations of pedagogical students coming to the university, who in the future will shape the face of education themselves. After all, it can be assumed that they will move to their workplaces (schools or care and educational institutions) models of communication corresponding to those they themselves experienced during their education. Experiencing dialogue during studies and appreciation of its value by the students of pedagogy gives hope for the development of dialogue at school. It remains a question: how is the dialogue understood? And it is the question of understanding the dialogue by young people who are preparing themselves to work as teachers-educators that is the main problem of my research in this article.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

When considering the state of contemporary higher education in the context of the role of dialogue in it, it should be noted that its current shape has been significantly influenced by the phenomena in the culture of the 20th century, which changed the social
mentality, influenced the ways of thinking and valuing, promoting individualism, entrepreneurship and arousing the consumption needs of citizens of countries of the knowledge-based economy. Successive raising of the standard of living of the representatives of European countries in the second half of the 20th century developed the educational aspirations of their citizens, who, pragmatically minded, enrolled themselves in their studies, seeing them as primarily tool for their own professional careers (McMillan, Cheney, 1996; Bok, 2004; Delucchi, Korgen, 2002). In Poland these phenomena occurred with redoubled strength after the political transformation, when at the turn of the 20th and 21st century everyone who wanted to gain or maintain an attractive job took up studies in the avalanche of the growing system of higher education (Śliz, Szczepański, 2014, p. 28; Górniewicz, 2012; Bauman, Zalewska, 2008, Thieme, 2009). In the conditions of the mass scale of studies, the quality of academic education has significantly decreased (Thieme, 2009, p. 297; Bieliński, Bujas et al., 2007). The studies started to be perceived as a simple and undemanding way of obtaining a diploma, which was supposed to increase the attractiveness of its holder in the labour market (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2013; Jankowska, 2017).

The recognition of academic education was deepened by the Bologna Process, which – although enthusiastically received by many as a strategy for making European higher education competitive (Kraśniewski, 2009; Chmielecka, 2013) – was a political project primarily responding to the economic needs of Europe, which highlighted the practical dimension of studies, indirectly increasing narrowly utilitarian expectations of students (Klimczak, 2010). By linking academic education to the labour market and promoting a pragmatic concept of knowledge, he strengthened the neoliberal discourse of thin thinking about education in economic categories. The implementation of the Bologna Process as well as the introduction of solutions for the drafting of curricula in accordance with the Qualification Framework synchronised in Europe, aimed at the comparability of diplomas and mobility, resulted in both bureaucratic and formalised studies.

Higher education institutions have found themselves in a situation of change and transformation into market and managerial models (Malewski, 2012; Kobylarek, 2016). Harnessed in market mechanisms they present an attitude towards the struggle: for the position on the educational market, the position in the rankings, for the number and “lucrativeness” of the grants received. They become institutions providing educational services, focused on effective acquisition of student-consumers (Welskop, 2019). Trying to attract them, they increase their efforts to make the educational process more attractive, mainly by making it more multimedia but also by reducing the content considered too demanding for young people expecting specifics. This often leads to understating the level of education and infantilising students who cease to be perceived as partners in academic life.

The analysis of the academic reality convinces me that today the dialogue forms of communication are being reduced rather than stimulated. Today we can talk about weakening academic communities and perceiving others (professors, students) as important for themselves for strictly utilitarian reasons, as useful for the realization of personal interests. Of course, these “others” may also become cooperating partners in the activities undertaken (if the parties consider it mutually beneficial), which does not change the fact that this type of partnership does not create special chances for personal closeness (Jankowska, 2019a).

In this context, the question of how contemporary students understand dialogue and experience its importance is particularly important, which justifies the value of the purpose of the article and the research I have undertaken. An attempt to deepen reflection
on this issue was initiated by the project "Understanding the essence and meaning of the process of academic education and the role that dialogue with an academic teacher plays in it by the students of pedagogy of state universities", carried out in the years 2006-2009. The threads of reflection on dialogue, which have been brought out in the course of the project, have been deepened with research in 2016 (individual interviews focused on the problem: IDI with students graduating from pedagogical studies). The research procedure took the form of semantic reconstruction of students’ statements obtained during in-depth interviews (IDI): 15 interviews conducted in 2006 and 12 interviews in 2016. The interviews conducted in 2016, in order to obtain the value of comparative material, were conducted in accordance with the procedures of a decade ago. The interviews of both editions (2006, 2016) were conducted at The Maria Grzegorzewska University in Warsaw, among students of the same field (pedagogy), time of study (last semester, just before the defence of the thesis), according to the same scenario. The author conducted all the interviews in person, lasting on average about 4 hours (from 3 to 5 hours – during two or three meetings). The author kept the same principle of inviting for research (mailing) and the principle of full voluntary participation in it. The persons expressing their willingness to participate in the research were aware of its expected time and effort of this experience, so in 2006 and 2016 the persons from the elite group of students, the most engaged and intellectually aroused, applied for the research [it is such a constant element, it is in other articles, hence in red colour].

RESULTS
The ways of understanding academic dialogue by students graduating from pedagogical studies in 2006 – 2016
The interviews conducted among the students were aimed at researching the understanding of the educational process and probably for this reason the threads concerning the academic dialogue appeared in the context of evaluation of the relations between academic teachers and students, less frequently between students (in their specialization group) as well as in the context of the quality of conducted classes (opening or closing to mutual communication). The analysis of the students’ narrations led to the conclusion that the dialogue was perceived from two perspectives, which I would define: 

pragmatic and humanistic. In the students’ narratives, these perspectives permeated each other although it was possible to read which one dominated.

The dialogue was pragmatically depicted mainly by the students presenting the so-called practical type, action-oriented, appreciating effectiveness and resourcefulness in the situation when a problem occurs. This pragmatic perspective of perceiving the dialogue correlated with the understanding of studies as a way of professional preparation, including the acquisition of specialist knowledge, acquisition of experience connected with pedagogical work, development of competences needed in the teaching profession as well as development of personality and social experience. On the other hand, the humanistic perspective of the description of the dialogue was adopted mainly by students presenting the reflexive type, speaking about studies as a process of gaining knowledge about the man and the processes governing his development, also about himself and as a process of developing his personality.

Understanding dialogue from the pragmatic perspective in the years of 2006 and 2016
The perspective of pragmatic approach to dialogue dominated both the 2006 and 2016 student narratives. The students indicated the values of dialogue for the construction of knowledge (dialogue as: pragmatic exchange of information, leading to operational
understanding and use of knowledge), solving various problems related to the process of education of social nature (negotiation in the organization and course of education) as well as directly for the didactics of academic education (method of conducting classes).

**Dialogue as a pragmatic exchange of information** is in the shortest sense a conversation conducted in connection with classes between the teacher and the students, sometimes in student groups, aimed at sharing information and exchanging knowledge on the subject, assessed as valuable for the parties. It is a communication of interlocutors with different potential (more and less experienced), bringing synergy effects in the conditions of cooperation. It aims at achieving useful knowledge and its operational understanding by the parties.

The majority of students graduating in 2006 combined dialogue with conversation, during which the information is shared and the knowledge about the subject assessed as valuable for the parties is exchanged. It is a communication of interlocutors with different potential (more and less experienced), bringing synergy effects in the conditions of cooperation. This pragmatic dialogue aims at achieving useful knowledge and operational understanding by the parties. What distinguishes a dialogue understood in such a way from a simple transfer of knowledge by a knowledgeable person (academic teacher) to the audience (students) listening to it is the fact that it is perceived in terms of a partnership conversation, with an exchangeability of roles, inspiring both parties to seek new solutions, although most of the responses pointed to the special role of teachers.

I associate academic dialogue with the provision of information by professors, that is, the academic teachers with the reaction of students to this information by professors and with the reflection of these professors on feedback. But then this reflection can be seen in the way information is passed on, that this reaction of the students is taken into account, that the teacher is conducting a kind of conversation (06K1).

In general, I understand the dialogue as the exchange of experience, the acquisition of information, one of the most valuable things is information. I am a pragmatist and I know that dialogue inspires. From my mentors I could learn different techniques, but not only. It was an exchange. It is like this that when someone is taught something, the feedback is received. (...) It's like an exchange of information, if somebody teaches me something, I can also give him an answer when I think otherwise. And then one can change something, when there is a dialogue something is changed. Only very little changes because there is not enough feedback (06M2).

Speaking of such an academic dialogue, most students in 2006 emphasized its informative and pragmatic value, indicating that it leads to making knowledge operational, in the sense – fully understandable and in this context important for practice (06K4, 06M2, 06K1, 06K11, 06K12). Students of teaching specialties expected that the dialogue will bring closer and brighten up the problems connected with the practice of the future profession, they emphasized the importance of dialogue communication with methodologists, having direct contact with educational institutions (06K) Students of non-teaching specialties more often pointed out issues connected with practice understood broadly – they pointed out the value of dialogue on the issues of life practice important for them (06M1; 06K4). When assessing the presence of pragmatic dialogue within the walls of the university, students admitted that the atmosphere at the studies serves it, because it is generally good, although there were also threads about the change in the functioning of the university in connection with the quantitative growth observed by students and the progressing mass of studies. They also positively assessed the staff, indicating that many academic teachers present an
attitude of kindness and openness. No less dominant was the conviction that the situation of dialogue as a pragmatic exchange of information during studies is definitely not enough. The reasons for the lack of dialogue were, on the one hand, seen in the attitude of superiority over the student and the lack of interest in the student presented by some academic teachers (especially older ones), and on the other hand, they pointed to the lack of courage, immaturity or laziness of students to undertake the effort of dialogue.

Openness to dialogue among academic teachers - very different, it depends on which lecturer, which subject. There are those who repeat very much and want the students to say what they think and want to change the way the classes look like, and there are those who keep 'chattering' the same and are unreformable. (06K10). "Teachers are very open to dialogue, willing to talk and pure human help, although of course there are cases: End of class, I thank you and I'm not here. But there are exceptions (06K13).

As I am now trying to remind myself, this ability to liberate dialogue is also related to age, that the younger one is much better at establishing some kind of contact, and the older one, I mean, now I think that the older one is, the worse... Because when for five years of studying one meets with a great kindness of people younger than the older ones, mostly already professors, with such reluctance or such treatment on principle: "Why are you here for God's sake!" and other such people, because with different attitudes towards each other I have met here, it's just that when we see each other we really close ourselves in (06K8).

Students admit that for a pragmatic dialogue to exist, a lot depends on the choice of the student group and the climate that will be built in it, and sometimes it varies. The representatives of the psychopedagogy of creativity spoke particularly positively about the opening climate of the group, emphasizing that getting into the specialization was a success and fulfilment of their aspirations, and the very process of education directed at workshop and training methods of work integrated the group, engaged in the search for new knowledge and taught to speak (06K4, 06M1). The potential inherent in the group was evaluated differently by a special education student. The threads of lowering the quality of education due to the attitude of group closure and lack of involvement (in the student's interpretation caused by the fact of "falling for this speciality when you did not get into another one”. (06K13) appeared several times in her narrative:

We were also told more than once by the lecturers that the work with us was difficult and that we did nothing. Maybe it is not appropriate to talk about your own group in the 5th year but as an exercise or lecture group I feel very sorry for all the lecturers who had some classes with us and wanted to do something, because when 20 people sit in front of them, only 4 or 5 of them express any willingness to do something because if there are 20 people sitting in front of them, of which only 4 or 5 are willing to do anything, I wouldn't want to come and try to talk to anyone after conducting three classes. The chance to engage in a committed pursuit of the problem is zero. Zero” (06 K13).

During the interviews, the students discovered that they reach the dialogue understood as pragmatic exchange of information as they grow up in the course of their study when enter into adult life. When they graduate, they are different from the young people starting their studies and the academic teachers are also more of a partner with them. The students carry out their own research related to their Master’s thesis, think about starting a family (or already have formal relationships), make choices about where they will work in the future, have professional experience gained during internships, and all this brings
them closer to the academic teachers. The possibility of dialogue with teachers is becoming more and more clearly seen as an opportunity to deepen and organize their knowledge (let us add: an opportunity that is ending and one that is often assessed as not fully grasped) (06K11, 06K7, 06K13). If they consider that the teacher present in the classroom has such important knowledge, they cease to resist asking for it, hence the dialogue as a pragmatic exchange of information is much more present in the last semesters (06K11, 06K7).

Also among the twelve IDIs from 2016, the dominant profile is the pragmatic one, which, after all, can be described as less “demanding” than a decade ago. When asked about the existence of a dialogue, they stated its presence in a short consultation after class (16K3, 16K10), asking students about something that was not understood (16K3, 16K7, 16M2). These situations (quite epidermal contact) are indicated as positive experiences of dialogue – as it happens and as it is expected. Save the exception (16K1), there were no situations of expressing disappointment with its limited form.

Well, it is known that after the class you can approach the teacher and this dialogue also occurs normally, yes? If there are any problems or something like that but I think that it is also very important during the class. Although during the exercises it is always this dialogue, but with the lectures, I have to say that it’s not always like that. Although some people know this, they also go with a microphone during the lecture and are happy to say that if somebody wants to speak, it is also possible, but not always (16K9).

Dialogue takes place on duty, then the exchange is more of a partnership. The students take advantage of the on-call duty rather when they have to, most of my friends take advantage of it when they have to, right? They go for consultations to explain, to make up for some absence. (...) I didn’t go to see a lecturer on their duty but sometimes I stayed after the class and there were 2-3 people who were expecting some additional information and in fact, a few minutes after the lecture or the exercises the consultation took place (16K7).

The dialogues that develop a little bit more broadly and delve a little deeper into the subject have their place mainly during the classes that deal with the problems directly related to the pedagogical practice. The content presented by the teacher and questions addressed to the students are often willingly taken up by those who have concrete experiences in this area. Due to the introduction of the Bologna Process, the two-stage study programme, students obtain a formal professional qualification already in their undergraduate studies, hence the professional work in the final stage of the second-degree programme is common. The working (not infrequently full-time) students experience various educational problems on a daily basis, so there are a lot of such situations of partnership communication on practically presented topics and known from experience (16K2, 16K3, 16K7). This pragmatic dialogue, after all, has more of a form of asking an expert how he interprets this or that situation than a joint search for knowledge. It seems that in 2016 the feature of pragmatic dialogue, which was the exchangeability of roles, starts to lose its importance and the dialogue starts to be combined with a one-way communication. Its aim is to obtain useful and yet strictly practical knowledge, to ask about it (usually an academic teacher, sometimes other students), and not a process of joint consideration of various, also theoretical issues in order to achieve their operational understanding.

It is worth adding that in the light of the 2016 narrative, a quite unique opportunity for dialogue is created by the talks with the placement supervisors (both at the stage of consultation preparing for the practice as well as during discussion on credits granting). The
value of internships was also pointed out by students graduating in 2006, not less so in the context of dialogue with the tutors of internships. It seems that students from 2016, when asked about the academic dialogue, cited situations of “diadiotic” conversations: students and academic teachers meeting in a certain seclusion. Discussing the internship was a rare example of just such a contact: conversations on a topic close to students because they experienced it during the meeting face-to-face. And it is precisely this feeling of being one of many students who is not noticed and recognized by the academic teachers, and lost in the mass – it appears in many narratives from 2016:

One can discern that the lecturer is an open-minded person and he encourages through his demeanour to establish any contact or dialogue with him. But I think that most of the lecturers here, not all of them, I have had contact with, are willing to help and will be happy to establish relationships here. Even if it’s only for a moment and then the lecturer will certainly forget. He has so many students. I sometimes get the impression that I say “good morning” to the lecturers, and he doesn’t even know who I am. Well, this is how it is. There are so many people around here that the lecturer can’t remember every face (16K3).

In this context, it is worth adding that the students in 2016 highly appreciated the atmosphere in the university and the attitudes of the academic teachers who open up to dialogue and encourage students to express their opinions. The student narratives (of course, at times critical of individual situations or persons) are more likely to express satisfaction with the relationships the students have built with university staff than the narratives of their colleagues graduating ten years earlier. Today's young people have less time to study and they squeeze in the university classes between other activities in their tight schedules. The students come (or “call in”) for the classes, do not stay in the university (which was the case ten years ago). In this situation, the contacts with the academic teachers, although anonymous and limited to those resulting from the implementation of the programme as well as temporary/fragmentary since they are perceived as friendly – are satisfactory (16K5, 16K6, 16K8, 16K10, 16M1, 16M2). The students of the academic year of 2016 appreciate the consideration and “straightforwardness towards students” of the academic teachers, they are happy to admit that the meetings in the class can be “fun” and “entertaining” (16K5, 16M1). It seems that the atmosphere of the university is more relaxed and academic teachers not only care about good relations with students but also adjust themselves to their expectations to make the educational process more attractive.

In their statements, however, they more often encounter critical words addressed to their colleagues. They perceive blockades destroying the atmosphere of dialogue (16K3, 16K7, 16M1 in their colleagues’ disrespectful, reluctant attitude towards studies (“not giving a damn about the study”), also lack of personal culture and dishonesty (“cunning attitude”), rather than fear of academic teachers (although it is also experienced by some of them)/

Mr dr F. certainly tried to talk to us, he tried that good word because there was simply no response from us, which was a pity. During the lectures the students were more active because there were many more people. During the exercises it’s hard to make us do anything at the beginning, but later, when we talk, we activise ourselves (16M1).

It wasn’t cool, there was no atmosphere. We were a group of 4 people. There were two such guys in my group. First, there were three of us, then the second friend joined us. And we wanted to get something out of it. We answered the lecturers, had some questions, there were some discussions. And very quickly it was felt that we were not really liked. That, “Oh, dear, they’re smart, smarting off geeks”. (…) We became such
Dialogue as a negotiation in the educational process in the narratives of the students is less frequent and what is characteristic in the narratives of the students of the above-mentioned specialization of psychopedagogy of creativity (06K, 06.K4, 06M1). The negotiation dialogue occurs when the arrangements are made for formal issues or verification of the level of implementation of those arrangements (organization of classes, credit issues, determining the mandatory content, etc.) (06K4, 06M2). It is worth noting that in the 2006 narratives, the negotiation dialogue combines pragmatic interests (finding a solution that takes account of one’s own interest) with an attitude of sensitivity to the needs of the other party. It is therefore based on reciprocity, honesty and respect. The students distinguish it from cunning negotiations aimed at pushing their interests forward.

It seems to me that this is how it works in the academy, that there are two sides and there is a program above them and this is something that you don’t discuss because you can’t change them or you can’t change some classes, there are things that you absolutely can’t change and there’s no point in discussing them and tackling them. And all the others, like whether you can drink coffee during the classes, whether you will move the classes or credits for the subject of such things, I think it’s worth discussing them. Because just like everyone else, it seems like a very cool idea to do a project in the groups to get a credit from the subject and they all ask us to do so. And dr. L., too. It was us who begged the lecturer for the colloquium since we have been doing projects for four years and we no longer want projects. The group presents its opinion: “let’s try the colloquium, such a nice thing!” and if there wasn’t this discussion, if we didn’t convince her, there would be another project. So here it is, that the lecturer is inventing this topic and is happy because she thinks it’s definitely something very interesting. And we don’t take it with heart because we are already tired of projects. And if we had to do them, we would do anything. And then she might feel offended by it or not know what’s wrong. She might think that there was something wrong with her classes. And with dialogue, it’s all clear and it’s okay (06K4).

In the 2016 narratives there are also threads concerning the negotiation dialogue but rather as side effects (i.e. not in the context of asking about the experience of dialogue during studies but rather when discussing some events related to the studies). The negotiation dialogues usually concern small strictly organizational issues, rarely problems related to the content of the programme. For students completing their studies in 2016, getting along with the teachers (or students among themselves) on issues related to the organisation of the studies is, on the one hand, something obvious and does not evoke greater emotions (which is connected with a good assessment of the atmosphere and the expected obtaining of agreement). There is also the phenomenon of the identification of certain representatives to negotiate during the course of the studies as well as – which was
not noticed in the 2006 narrations – cases of conscious work on the development of their communication skills.

The dialogue means boldly addressing others and agreeing. The girls from the group call me and ask me, listen, you’ll know for sure” because I don’t have any problem to approach and find out, to approach Mr Dean, you or the teacher. I don’t want to take credit for this because there are still 2-3 persons in our group who wouldn’t have a problem with it either but the rest is like “I won’t go because I don’t know, I’m ashamed or something else. Or rather out of convenience (...). I don’t have to make friends with everyone but I should get along with everyone. Maybe I take these things too seriously but it seems to me that just a person who is here at the university, who is twenty or so years old, who is already an adult, has to work out this courage because if you don’t start to work out your own openness towards Madam doctor, someone else.

What can be noticed is the fact that in this description of a negotiation dialogue its feature of openness to the needs of the other party does not sound. A dialogue is simply understood as a negotiation, whose art of conducting is seen in its boldness, the ability to convince one’s own right, to deal with the adversary and not the desire to find a solution that would secure the needs of the other party.

From a pragmatic perspective, there are also positions that identify academic dialogue with the method of conducting classes (06K3, 06K4). The students presenting it (from the group of creativity psychopedagogy) indicated that the specificity of their specialization is based, among other things, on the dialogue methods of work. They drew attention to the teachers who use the dialogue method. They pointed out that they stand out positively from others. They shorten the distance towards students and are close to them but their ability to base their classes entirely on dialogue and the art of conducting them decides that they remain natural leaders. They conduct a dialogue in the sense of directing a discussion, asking original, opening questions and at the same time consistently pursue these goals and bring closer the content that they have previously established and selected.

We are more open to dialogue than other students because the specifics of their classes are very open. They are close to us and are supposed to be close to us because they conduct trainings also interpersonal training. So that the dialogue is inscribed in the realization of the classes. They can’t conduct these classes differently and it feels like that. That is why we, as a group, are used to be involved in the classes and it is difficult for us to accept such classes that the lecturer is for themselves and the student is to sit and listen (06K3).

We had a different form of work, we sat in a circle and all of us took part in the classes and often Ms W. also took part in the exercises, if it was possible and the fact that we always address each other informally “you” during the trainings, they were so... We knew that she was always in control of what she was conducting but at times we felt so perfectly and so comfortable (...). At that time it was such first uncontrolled situation that she had no authority because she was at the desk, only because she was conducting those classes, being with us in the group, in the very middle of the group and does not differ at all, neither in dress, nor in appearance, nor in the place of standing, nor in anything, but she has to control our group because she is conducting these classes and has a plan and has to teach us this and not anything or we can’t just have a nice time (06K4).
The students highly appreciate the value of the dialogue method in education, indicating that if properly implemented, it bases knowledge, allows building the skeleton of the information system, serves the development of various competences, thus arguing the value of dialogue as a method – its pragmatism. They are aware that in order to take full advantage of its values, the students must be properly prepared. In the narration (06K3) there are thoughts that for the success of basing the educational process on dialogue as a method it is necessary to “have factual knowledge on the discussed subject and not only to be based on emotional assessment and intuitive opinions whether I like it or not, seems right or wrong”. Thus, it indicates that the value of the dialogue as a method of conducting classes does not consist in creating a nice atmosphere in which one can simply talk. What is important here is cognitive motivation to conduct a dialogue, most often provoked by conscious questions asked by the instructor, which are read as important or interesting by students, which in turn triggers an authentic search for answers to them. Systematically conducted dialogue during classes is a way of discovering the insufficiency of one’s knowledge and awakening the attitude of active searching for it. In this sense, understanding dialogue as a method of conducting classes seems to be close to the Socratic approach.

The student narrations from 2016 confirmed the high evaluation of classes conducted using the dialogue method. In this context, the statement stands out that has already been pointed out as being outstanding in many fields of 16K1. It has made a strong criticism of the dialogue as an educational method.

There is a conviction that there was once such an important person in pedagogy, I absolutely do not remember all those names and that the role of students is to learn all this piously and to repeat it. And this dialogue boils down to the fact that they are supposed to come to all those important truths which are written there, everyone thinks that this dialogue consists in coming to this enlightened truth. Ii... that’s why this discussion never happened because for me it’s not an enlightened truth, it’s something that generations have come to and what changed all the time and... uh... just repeating what was there is pointless. (...) There are also experiences in literature that mix and create something unique and new and this is how it should look like, and here the dialogue would be advisable to create these... unique new worlds in the minds of every student, and in the classes where we were theoretically just discussing it, was always one enlightened truth that we were supposed to reach, so it cannot be called a discussion. I can discuss it with myself for my own use and that’s it (16K1).

Understanding academic dialogue in a humanist perspective in 2006 and 2016

The dialogue from humanistic perspective was understood in terms of personal dialogue, which is an existential experience – non-existing in the walls of the university as well as a conversation that brings closer and thus opens to knowledge. The students who accepted this perspective saw dialogue as an opportunity to express themselves, to make their thoughts known in the atmosphere of understanding and the presence of an open and close interlocutor. Dialogue was understood as a special communication, based on trust and openness and help towards the other person, whose aim was to bring the interlocutors closer and get to know each other and support each other. This humanistic, the author would also say personalistic, perspective remained close to the philosophers of dialogue.

Among the interlocutors from 2006 there were students whose narratives are the threads of referring to dialogue in terms of personal conversation. They were impressed by the idea of personal dialogue of the meeting, which they met during their academic education and in which power they believed. The acceptance of the idea of dialogue was
based on intuition but it was also confirmed by the personal and private experience of life (the experience of the meeting in a marriage and religious community – 06K9).

Dialogue is communication in which there must be empathy, in which there is no division between you and I, only there is a community. And then one is happy and sees everything clearly”. (06K12). “The dialogue is a topic from the upbringing theory. I remember it, although I don’t remember much of the subject. The dialogue is the understanding of both sides, understanding, respect, with this very exchange of thoughts... that is the first thing that comes to my mind” (06K9). The dialogue is talking with people, I don’t know, the loved ones, such where we meet, there is also such trust, interest in what’s with me, what’s with you, I listen to your problems, you listen to mine, I advise you, you advise me, there is information there is listening, closeness and there is a feedback, I think that’s what it is about. This is very valuable because thanks to this I get to know the other person, what he thinks about, what his desires and dreams are, I just get to know him (06K7).

Combining the understanding of dialogue with the existential experience, when asked about the dialogue in the space of studies and universities, they stated its absence. The personal dialogue requires an informal community and intimacy, which is not present in the university. The academic dialogue is understood in a different way but developing from the academic perspective it takes over certain values of the dialogue understood as a personalized and close communication. It takes place in a community where there is a certain division of roles but in the dialogue these roles complement each other and teachers as well as the students remain open to each other, their thoughts and needs. The representatives of the humanist perspective, while presenting a particular sensitivity to the issues of interpersonal relations, referred more clearly and emotionally to the fact of changes taking place before their eyes in the university, related to the mass nature of the studies, technologicalisation and anonymity. They drew attention to the distance between academic teachers and students, anti-dialogical attitudes of the academic teachers, withdrawal of the student from communication.

However, when it comes to the dialogue between students and academic teachers, these are rare situations. It takes place in such a way that we come to classes and the “dialogue”. [sarcasm] is, for example, a form of checking the attendance list, but it’s not that full dialogue I would possibly refer to. Then, there is no more that dialogue because it is in such a way that the teacher says something about something, sometimes he asks a question and we answer these questions, but in my opinion it is not a form of such full dialogue, it is rather a question-answer, question-answer, and that is the end of that dialogue, that conversation. I mean, there are classes that are conducted in the form of a conversation, that the subject is given and we talk about it, I admit that I attend now one subject conducted in this way by Dr P., concerning conversations with parents, various educational problems are raised and how we will solve them, and each of us expresses his or her own opinion on a given subject. But this is also not always a full dialogue because I also sometimes refrain from some statements, consciously or less consciously, that for example, I will say something stupid, that this person will criticize in advance, and I do not always feel like listening to this criticism, when I know, for example, that my opinion is different from that of other people and I do not always feel like it. For me, this is not exactly a dialogue, rather a form of discussion, exchanging observations, my own opinion, but, I mean, there it is also supposed to be that I am listening, commenting and giving feedback, but it is probably not such a full dialogue, because we do not get to know ourselves, we
only get to know some information, what we think about a given subject, but it is probably not aimed at some kind of deeper knowledge of a given person (06K7).

Now I have such classes where every exchange of arguments is a forced conversation, it’s not even a conversation, it’s something more like that, something more like that... it’s like I’m gonna say something, the lecturer will say something as if he wasn’t listening to me, sometimes I feel like he’s not even looking at me or I’m saying something and he knows what he’s going to say anyway. For me it’s incredible that there are people who say that they want the students to speak and still say something that they had prepared before. They are not able to reorganize themselves, take into account what the students have said before. And how can we talk about dialogue here, there is no dialogue, and there is no conversation either (06K10).

The narratives of students graduating in 2016 reveal that the humanistic approach to dialogue is actually non-existing. The students are less sensitive to the ideas of the philosophy of dialogue and less interested in them than their peers from a decade ago. The issues of dialogue have been addressed mainly in terms of describing what is really happening in the area of information exchange through language. In two cases, the dialogue was also considered as “cooperation communication”, a conversation naturally undertaken in conditions of cooperation. However, there is a lack of references to dialogue, typical for the science of dialogue of the idea of personal dialogue. In the programmes they are implementing, the science of dialogue is still not being tackled, leaving no permanent traces in their language. The students use the language of practice, evoking quite superficial connotations of the dialogue, reduced to the process of the flow of messages. “The dialogue is that when you catch a topic and say one sentence, the other person and the third person are immediately involved and in a moment everyone starts talking. This leads to the fact that it’s interesting, that is, we come to some common goal and the one who thought at the beginning what the other will think at the end of this conversation and starts to wonder if he had right thoughts all his life. It’s cool (16M1).

Sometimes they define dialogue with the language of communication theory: “Exchange of information between two people, flow of messages, transmitting, receiving, interpreting” (16K6) but the language of dialogue is missing. In statements about dialogue there are hardly any terms (however, appearing in the statements from a decade ago), such as: trust, respect, closeness (only in one IDI 16K8: respect), but there are new expressions “overeager”, “not overeager” (meaning an initiator, not an initiator of the communication: 16M1, 16M2, 16K9) “prostudent” (meaning: friendly, interested in the student's voice: 16K6, 16K10), “has an open mind” (daunting and creating an atmosphere for conversation: 16K3). This re-education of the humanist perspective is the main difference between the statements.

CONCLUSIONS

The research on the understanding of dialogue identified the fields of meaning given to it by young people graduating from pedagogical studies and, in the comparative thread, interpreted the perceived otherness of the perspectives of approaches to it by the representatives of two groups of students from academic years far away from each other by a decade. The described shift in the meanings assigned to dialogue, which took place between 2006 and 2016, can be described as a departure from the understanding of the dialogue in humanistic and existential terms and a shift towards a pragmatic view of subjective, but at the same time factual, focused on the concrete and practical effect, communication. The direction of these shifts can be interpreted as a reflection of the direction of the signalled changes taking place in contemporary universities, which are connected with the mass scale of studies and the lack of appropriate selection of candidates,
the practical character and professionalization of academic education, reducing the “unnecessary” theory, the adaptation of universities to the low expectations of attractive and pleasant studies presented by the contemporary youth, shaped by the shaped by a culture of immediacy, fun and consumption, and exposed to a levelling ability to reflect or to think critically. The way of understanding the dialogue between an academic teacher and a student not only reveals the consciousness of the students, but also – indirectly – illustrates the state of personalization/depersonalization of the contemporary universities.

REFERENCES