Improving Students’ Critical Thinking Skills by Reading

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Abstract: According to sociologists, our society has now moved to a completely new stage of its development. Today's society is an information society. Constant social development makes more and more new demands on the modern personality. The constantly accelerating rhythm and dynamics of life, huge information flows, various kinds of problems and complex tasks that require immediate solution require the development of new personality traits: personality mobility, creativity, self-management, self-control and self-regulation abilities. In this article described issues based on improving students’ critical thinking skills by reading.

Keywords: self-control and self-regulation abilities, critical thinking, reading.

Introduction

The current stage in the development of human civilization requires qualitatively new orientations in language education. The study of a foreign language today is aimed at developing a harmonious personality, ready for contacts with representatives of a different culture, ready for intercultural communication at a high level. The task of developing a personality that could be successful in the modern world rests entirely with teachers. The teacher is tasked with teaching how to work correctly with information and various information sources, correctly evaluate the information received and find the most effective ways to use it.

The task of intellectual development is the ability to assimilate new information, and intellectual mobility, critical thinking, which in modern society are an essential condition for successful adaptation of a person to changing life circumstances.

Never before has an education system prepared student for life in such a dynamic environment. The central task for students is to learn how to effectively find knowledge, think critically. They must be able to perceive new information, carefully and critically examine it. And also to be able to balance different points of view in your mind, to be able to expose the idea to slight skepticism, to check individual ideas for the possibility of their use.

The ability to think, analyze, weigh circumstances and make decisions (that is, in fact, critical thinking itself) is one of the most important that can be developed in students, although in fact not many educators understand its importance. In addition, it is thinking (and critical thinking in particular) that determines the worldview and character of any person, and most importantly, makes him a person, that is, one who has his own opinion on a particular issue. A person who knows how to think critically, that is, in a complex way, is able to develop harmoniously and comprehensively, since in most cases he perfectly understands why he got this or that result.

Discussions

Critical thinking is an integral part of an adult, educated, well-mannered and comprehensively developed person, ready to make serious life decisions and able to be responsible for his actions. To understand how to develop critical thinking, we first need to understand what it is. This term has quite a lot of definitions, because it includes many areas of thought. Critical thinking, in turn, differs in that, in fact, it is not an ability of our brain and does not develop with age. It is rather a
skill, a skill that a person can acquire in the course of education.

The term “critical thinking” is also known from the works of well-known psychologists J. Piaget, L.S. Vygotsky and others. However, until now, largely due to outdated everyday ideas, there is an opinion about critical thinking as something negative, as about the desire to deny, refute, contradict everything. At the same time, any psychologist or philosopher will tell you that critical thinking is an extremely important thing, a skill that allows us to successfully cope with the demands of the 21st century, helps to better understand what we study and do.

In the psychological and pedagogical literature, various definitions of this term are given. If we give more detailed definitions, then they look something like this:

- Think critically:
- show curiosity;
- ask yourself questions;
- reveal the causes and consequences of facts;
- carry out a systematic search for answers;
- doubt generally accepted truths;
- develop a point of view and the ability to defend it with logical arguments;
- take into account the arguments of the opponent and logically comprehend them.

Consequently, critical thinking is the ability to balanced, rationally and comprehensively perceive any event or situation and clearly understand the cause-and-effect relationships [1].

It is known that knowledge acquired by reproductive means (that is, presented by someone “as is”, without comprehension), using explanatory and illustrative methods, is forgotten very quickly, while critical thinking serves as an impetus for independent work, to consider the very essence of what is being studied. event, process or phenomenon. And the knowledge obtained through mental efforts, through the search and resolution of contradictions not only become intellectual property, but also provides an opportunity for the formation of the personality as a whole.

In other words, a person with developed critical thinking can:

- Raise tough questions and concerns in a clear and concise way;
- ✔ collect and admit relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret them effectively;
- ✔ come to reasonable conclusions and decisions, checking them against criteria and standards;
- ✔ think open-mindedly within alternative thought systems;
- ✔ communicate effectively with others when developing a solution;
- ✔ be free from prejudices and public opinion [4].

In our opinion, the best result of all of the above will be the saying of the American psychologist and intelligence researcher Joy Paul Guilford: “To live is to have problems. Solving them means growing intellectually.”

It is necessary to understand that this skill (or ability) does not develop by itself, it is necessary to create special conditions for its development and improvement. To do this, in 1997, American educators Ginny Steele, Kurt Meredith, Charles Temple and Scott Walter came up with a technology called "Reading and writing for the development of critical thinking." What are its advantages?

- the nature and style of interaction between the teacher and students - democracy, dialogue, openness, reflexivity;
leading type of activity - productive, creative, problematic;
ways of assimilation of new information - search mental activity of students, analysis;
forms of organization - individual, group;
teaching methods - problematic, partially exploratory, research, reflective;
technology forms the flexibility of thinking, perseverance, readiness to correct one's mistakes, the ability to reasonably prefer one idea to another, argue reasonably, develop an original point of view [7].

This technology includes three main stages: challenge, comprehension and reflection.

1. Challenge
Its goals are:
✓ actualization and generalization by students of knowledge on a given topic or problem;
✓ Motivation of students for independent active work (i.e. search for various solutions).

Despite the relatively short duration (1-3 minutes), it is this stage that is fundamental, since in the absence of motivation and interest in the problem under discussion, the entire lesson may not work.

2. Making sense
The peculiarity of this stage is that here the teacher has the least possible influence on the students, because he only needs to give out new information, and the students will do the main work on processing and comprehension. They correlate new information with their established ideas, consciously connect the new with the already known, thereby creating a new understanding of the topic or problem.

3. Reflection
Students reflect on what they have learned, actively rebuild their ideas about the problem in order to include new concepts. There is a lively exchange of ideas between students, which gives them the opportunity to get acquainted with different points of view; teaches you to listen carefully to your friend and defend your opinion with reason.

To implement the technology of critical thinking, various forms of training can be used, for example:

- data collection;
- text analysis;
- comparison of alternative points of view on one problem;
- collective discussion, debates, discussions;
- different types of group and pair work;
- publication of written works of students.

The role of the teacher when using the technology for the development of critical thinking is as follows. He:
✓ directs the efforts of students in a certain direction;
✓ collides different opinions, provoking a dispute;
✓ creates conditions that encourage independent decision-making.

As you can see, the technology for developing critical thinking is quite complex, and each stage matters. In addition, it is easy to guess that not in every group it can work. A high level of formation of interpersonal relationships and good skills in group and pair work are needed.
Benefits of technology for students:

- improving the efficiency of information perception;
- an increase in interest both in the material being studied and in the learning process itself;
- ability to think critically;
- ability to work collaboratively with others;
- improving the quality of education;
- desire and ability to become a person who learns throughout life.

So, the "Basket" of ideas, concepts, as a rule, is used at the beginning of the lesson. It allows you to find out what students know or think about the topic or problem under discussion (the “challenge” stage). The bottom line is this: the teacher offers to write everything that is known on a particular topic. It is important to write down all the associations that come to mind. The first 2 minutes work is done individually. Then there is an exchange of information in pairs or mini-groups. After 2-3 minutes - the final stage, each pair or group calls one expression, which is recorded on the board (the so-called "dumping ideas in the basket").

The goals of this technique are to challenge the existing ideas of students on a certain topic and ensure that each student is included in the process.

"Cinquain". It comes from the French "cing" - five. This is a poem with five lines. It is used as a method of material synthesis. The conciseness of the form develops the ability to summarize information, to express the idea in a few meaningful words, capacious and concise expressions. Rules for writing cinquain:

1 line - the theme of the poem, expressed in one word, usually a noun;
2 line - a description of the topic in a nutshell, usually with adjectives;
3 line - a description of the action within the framework of this topic in three words, usually verbs;
4 line - a phrase of four words expressing the author's attitude to this topic;
Line 5 - one word, a synonym for the first, on an emotional-figurative or philosophical-generalized level, repeating the essence of the topic.

Cinquain can be offered as an individual independent task; to work in pairs; less often as a collective work. Usually cinquain is used at the stage of reflection. As experience shows, Cinquains can be very useful as:

- a tool for synthesizing complex information;
- a way to assess the conceptual baggage of students;
- means of developing creative expression.

Applying the listed techniques in the lessons of literary reading, it is possible to achieve the development of critical thinking in schoolchildren. Critical thinking is healthy doubt about something. The teacher is faced with the task of working for the final result, teaching children so that the child can find the main thing. In a changing world, students need to be able to analyze information and decide what is most important, to be able to express their attitude to new ideas and knowledge, to give a concept to something new, to reject inappropriate and unnecessary information.

Conclusion

So, the practice of using elements of technology for the development of critical thinking in teaching reading confirms that in order to use the listed methods of work, students must have a sufficiently high level of communicative competence (they must have a rich vocabulary, flexible
grammatical skills, as well as the ability to process information - highlight the main, weed out the secondary/superfluous, argue your point of view).

Technologies for the development of critical thinking can be safely attributed to active teaching methods in modern education, which form the social and communicative competence of students, which contributes to the establishment of effective communications with others in the search for the optimal solution to complex social issues, the manifestation of flexibility of thinking and creativity. The accumulated experience will certainly help them feel confident in independent adult life.

References: