DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF CRITICAL THINKING IN THE ROMANIAN LITERATURE CLASS

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Abstract
    The problem of knowledge and development of active, creative attitude is not new, but today it is put more pregnantly due to the contemporary society, strongly developed and troubled by new situations. As the world becomes more complex and democracy spreads more and more, it becomes obvious that young people must, more than ever, be able to solve difficult problems, critically examine conditions, weigh alternatives and, of course, take decisions considered witting.It is also obvious that critical thinking is a capacity that must be developed and encouraged in a favorable learning environment.Science, technique, social life require, more than ever, the intelligence and inventiveness of the members of society.The school is of the community and the whole society is responsible for the conditions and quality of learning. It is absolutely necessary for the student to get involved and participate actively, to become a motivated partner of the learning process.

Key words: active learning, critical thinking, active methods, interaction, knowledge, skills, attitudes, value judgments.

INTRODUCTION

Living in a constantly changing society, the student will have to give a sense to the informational universe he met in a critical, creative and productive way. Educational instructive-formative action aims to produce cognitive, emotional-motivational, attitudinal and behavioral changes in the personality of the pupil, the one always subject to training. Critical thinking is one of the basic skills that the 21st century school tries to develop in students, and in this context, I think that meeting with the text at Romanian language and literature classes must also have this finality. To handle the information well, the student will need to:
- to apply a set of thinking skills that will offer him the possibility to sort the information efficiently,

- to go through a systematic process of analysis and critical reflection,
- to know how to apply thinking processes, to learn critically, to effectively select data, to give them meanings that, in their turn, will be materialized in certain behaviors.

Impact will not occur automatically, as students will be accustomed to identify, process, acquire and use information and ideas; also, they will be formed the ability to analyze and critical reflection. For this thing to happen in class, the teacher must provide, equally, a framework for systematic and transparent thinking and learning: systematically - in order to understand and apply the process in a consistent manner; transparent - for students to become aware, track, and monitor their own thought processes during the independent study. This framework should give the student the ability to figure out where he is from the point of view of thinking, so he can follow and monitor his own thinking processes in the moment they learn independently. The role of the teacher is irreplaceable because he is the organizer of the learning conditions.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Being in a century of *modern technology*, when the student is more and more attracted to computer and net, the multitude of extra-curricular activities is an impediment to the reading act, which for many students is an obligation that some find useless and worthless. Thus, the reading tends to get into a rut for oblivion. But without reading and communication exercises, the expression of the young from the new generation will be desirable. That is why the teacher has to attract him, to use modern methods that contribute to the development of critical thinking. By using these methods the student is attracted and the teacher gives him the opportunity to become aware of his own thinking and to use his own language.

Critical thinking is centered on testing and evaluating possible solutions in a given problem situation, choosing the right solution, the reasoned rejection of the least appropriate ones. All studies show that learning comes from exercise, which is putting into practice what we have learned to be able, for example, to answer questions. This thing determines the students to process the information and give it a meaning found by them.

Active learning determines the students to form their own understanding of the material and their own perspective. The image of the 21st century school is still unclear; but the lines of force that a careful observer may surprise can be found in the following trends:

- focusing on "student", the needs of the beneficiary and, at the same time, our partner in our own training;
- using modern methods to best cover the entire sphere of interest of the educated person, who will represent the resource and the creator of resources for future years.

To think critically means to be curious, to ask questions, to seek answers, to search for causes and implications, to find alternatives to already established attitudes, to adopt a position on the basis of argued foundation and to logically argue the arguments of others. The role of active methods is to facilitate understanding of reading, to guide students to readings appropriate to their age, and to optimal use of their knowledge and information obtained. The methods for critical thinking development are integrated into a specific teaching-learning framework, structured in three phases:

- evocation - students are asked to remember what they know or what they think they know about the topic to be addressed;
- making sense - students get in touch with new content;
- reflection - marks the moment when students really acquire new knowledge, expressing them in their own words.

During Romanian language and literature classes, the capitalization of critical thinking is a necessity and a way of forming logical thinking skills, having as intention the determination of students to read their work tasks carefully and to use all the resources of which they dispose for their optimal education. At reading time, actively engaging students develops their curiosity by actually targeting them to knowledge and discovery.

The trustworthy climate in which they work together with their colleagues as a team, in the presence of a teacher concerned with the work of his students, with free discussions and textual interpretations, directs the students towards a proper working style that suits the original ideas. The task of the teacher is not easy, and the conditions of creating a climate favorable to active methods are laborious and require prior training. The teacher is open to communication and is willing to listen to any opinion without contradicting it by constantly trying to actively involve all students,

giving them all confidence and capitalizing on all the ideas. In turn, the students are open and tolerant to their colleagues, accepting any new and valuable idea to formulate valuable judgments.

Such active methods that stimulate student involvement are: brainstorming, Venn chart, quintet, clusters, double-entry journal, five-minute essay, joint investigation, predictive reading, debate, SINELG, story map or concept map, three-step interview, etc.All of this guides students to use everything they know, but also to explore new knowledge that is left to be discovered. The teacher has the role of a mediator; he must decide beforehand what methods he uses to get to know his students and to involve everyone in the lesson to use all their potential.

Hereafter, I will present some of the methods for developing critical thinking: *S.I.N.E.L.G. METHOD* (Interactive Scoring System for Reading and Thinking Effectiveness): students are invited to read a text carefully, marking on it some graphic signs as follows:

- Tick (√) if ideas confirm what they know
- Plus (+) if read information is new to them
- Minus (-) if the information contradicts or differs from what they know
- The question mark (?) If the ideas are unclear or they want more information

Signs appearing on the edge reveal a student's relationship to the text. These may vary from one student to another. The method is mainly used in the making sense stage, providing learning based on the active cognitive involvement of students in reading a text and understanding the content of ideas.

CLUSTER'S TECHNIQUE encourages students to think freely, openly, to point out connections between ideas, being, above all, a technique to search for the way to access their own knowledge, beliefs, highlighting their own understanding of a subject. Making a cluster chart involves several steps:

- writing a notion or a sentence - core in the middle of the board (eg: "Romania")
- identifying and writing as many words as possible that come into students mind about the notion or theme;

- linking words or ideas by drawing lines or arrows, highlighting the connections that students intuit.

There are a few rules that students have to respect when drawing up a bunch of ideas:

- to write everything that comes to mind about the topic being discussed;
- to not evaluate the ideas proposed, but to note them down;
- to not stop writing until all the ideas that come to mind are exhausted or until the time has elapsed;
- to let appear as many ideas and connections as possible, without limiting their number.

The cluster technique applies both in the *evocation* and *reflection* phases. Used in the group, this technique gives students the opportunity to get acquainted with both the ideas of their colleagues and the associations of these ideas.

CUB METHOD helps us to study a theme from different perspectives. The method involves using a cube (real or imaginary) that has different instructions noted on each face, as follows:

- Describe - What does it look like?
- Compare - What does it look like and why is it different?
- Associate - What makes you think about?
- Analyzes - What is it made of?
- Apply - How can it be used?
- Arguments - Is it good or bad? Why?

The teacher asks students to write about a particular concept or topic, passing all six faces of the cube. It is preferable to respect the order presented because it leads the students gradually to a complex thinking. An activity based on this method highlights the thinking operations involved in learning content, supporting students in learning it.

QUINTET is a quick tool for reflection, synthesis and summary of concepts and information; is a poem that requires the synthesis of information in concise expressions describing reflections on a subject. On the elaboration of these five-verse poems, students can work individually or in pairs, respecting several requirements:

- The first verse has a single word that specifies the subject of poetry;

- The second verse consists of two words describing the subject;
- The third verse consists of three words expressing actions;
- The fourth verse consists of four words and expresses feelings about the subject;
- The fifth verse consists of a word and expresses the essence of the subject.

The quintet is especially used in the *reflection* stage, stimulating the discussion about the reason the students have written certain ideas, occasioning the evaluation of understanding and expressing creativity.

I KNOW / I WANT TO KNOW / I LEARNED it is a method whose sequences are found in all three stages of the teaching-learning framework: *evocation, making sense, reflection*. In the evocation phase students are asked to inventory their own ideas about the topic to be addressed. These are noted under *"I know"* rubric. Unclear issues or those about which students would be curious to learn are listed under *"I want to know"* rubric. Students are directed to the sources in which they find the information (libraries, magazines, books, informed persons). After completing the research, at the stage of *achieving the meaning*, the students complete the *"I learned"* rubric with the most important things they have found.

MOZAIC METHOD can be used when the material to be taught has a written form. The method involves activities in heterogeneous groups of 4-5 students. It has several phases:
- are formed groups of 4-5 students called *"natives groups"* (the teacher divides the text to be studied in a number of parts equal to the number of groups)
- are formed *"expert groups"* (by counting from 1 to 4, number 1 forms group 1, number 2 forms group 2, etc.) Each expert group studies 15 minutes of part of the text, identifying the main ideas and how will teach these ideas to colleagues.
- students return to their native groups and teach the content they are expert in.

Each group of experts may have a record sheet to guide them in reading and exact understanding of the text.

THE VALUE LINE is a method by which the teacher launches a controversial issue for discussion, and students can take a *pro, counter* or

undecided position. Students independently think about the issue, outlining a specific answer, and then, at the request of the teacher, sit in the classroom on an axis according with the position adopted on the issue in discussion.So, staid down, they talk to other colleagues about the answers to the question and the sustained arguments. At one end of the axis are those who have favorable opinions, so *pro* arguments, and at the other end those who have *unfavorable* opinions.*Undecided* can be placed in the middle of this value line. They can change their position if the arguments of their colleagues convince them. Finally, divergent opinions are discussed and conclusions are drawn. *The value line* is a collaborative way of learning in which the whole class takes part and is used, in particular, in the *reflection* stage.

THE METHOD OF SMALL GROUPS LEARNING postulate the principle of strengthening the cohesion of the group through the interaction between its members, emphasizing the idea that the goal and the success of the group can be achieved only if all the members of the team are involved in the activity.

The teacher teaches a lesson, and then students in groups of 3-4 members analyze the given material, ask questions to each other, compare the answers, discuss until they are convinced that they all possess the material. The teacher then addresses questions to test the acquisition of knowledge, and the group score is obtained by assessing the progress of each member in relation to its previous performance. This method allows students to develop very important skills such as:

❖ request and provide information,
❖ ask questions,
❖ to seek answers,
❖ to explain and argument,
❖ to provide support and clarify,
❖ tolisten to and reflect on what has been said.

Then every student, regardless of the level of intellectual development, is valuable and important through the fact that he can contribute by personal progress (relative to previous performance), to the score and implicitly to the success of the group. This aspect has motivational influences on students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In my opinion, any method used in the lesson has advantages and disadvantages. Among the disadvantages are the following: poor management of working time, noise and clutter that require additional effort from the teacher. Advantages are valuable and multiple. In such aclass when I capitalized the active methods was a success and the students were delighted.

Critical thinking is a complex process that begins with the assimilation of knowledge, with the acquisition of operations and mental processes of information processing and continues with the formation of beliefs and beliefs that underlie the embracementof some decision and ends with the manifestation of appropriate and effective adaptive behaviors.Also,critical thinking is a product, meaning a point to which our thinking in which we think critically, as a natural way to interact with ideas and information. The active involvement of students in the learning process must be promoted permanently as it is an essential element of critical thinking.

CONCLUSIONS

Thinking works best in a risk-free atmosphere where ideas are respected. Trust must be given in each student's ability to think critically. It is essential to communicate to students that their opinion is valuable, not only the oral or written reproduction of what has been taught; their critical thinking is appreciated, and their opinions contribute to a better understanding of the conclusions discussed.As they develop their ability to think critically, students increase their ability to express oral, written, coherent and convincing of thoughts, autonomy in thinking (respect for their ideas and others), logic, finding and accepting alternatives, formulating judgments and the practice of constructive thinking.

Critical thinking forms true citizens for an open society, cooperative citizens able to lead, manifest tolerance for people from any environment, but to show individual initiatives guided by principles but able to find solutions that adapt to the reality in full change.

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