THE USE OF THE INTERACTIVE FORMS AND METHODS OF SYNTOPICAL READING APPROACH IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SENIOR SCHOOL CLASSROOM

O USO DE FORMAS INTERATIVAS E MÉTODOS DE ABORDAGEM DE LEITURA SINTÓPICA EM CLASSES AVANÇADAS DE LÍNGUA INGLESA

EL USO DE FORMAS INTERACTIVAS Y MÉTODOS DE ENFOQUE DE LECTURA SINTÓPICA EN EL AULA DE LA ESCUELA SECUNDARIA DE IDIOMA INGLÉS

Lyubov MARYMONSKA[1]
Vira PONOMAROVA[2]
Liudmyla BYRKUN[3]

ABSTRACT: This article aims to research the use of the interactive forms and methods of syntopical reading approach in the English language senior school classroom to improve cognitive skills and learners' competence in reading as well as to develop critical thinking. While the Analytical reading mostly involves the students' activities such as argumentation, analysis, and evaluation of the certain text through finding examples in the same text, the Syntopical reading develops critical thinking as (long as) it concentrates on the students' skills to compare and contrast different texts dealing with one and the same topic, to express sophisticated ideas, to integrate or synthesize the ideas from multiple sources and to formulate original arguments. The objectives of the article are to determine the stages of the described learning process, the structure of every proposed stage and to develop the corresponding system of exercises for mastering the mentioned competence skills and develop critical thinking in students. The research draws pedagogical implications for an English senior school classroom, suggesting that language teachers employ explicit teaching of reading strategies that facilitate critical reading and develop critical thinking skills.

KEYWORDS: Senior school. Critical thinking. Thinking skills. Reading strategies. System of exercises.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo pesquisar o uso de formas interativas e métodos de abordagem de leitura sintópica na sala de aula do ensino médio de língua inglesa para melhorar as habilidades cognitivas e a competência dos alunos em leitura, bem como para desenvolver o pensamento crítico. Enquanto a leitura analítica envolve principalmente as atividades dos alunos, como argumentação, análise e avaliação de determinado texto por meio

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[1] Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv – Ukraine. Assistant Professor. Department of Methods of Teaching Ukrainian and Foreign Languages and Literature. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3320-5059. E-mail: l.marymonska@ust-hk.com.cn

[2] Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv – Ukraine. PhD in Pedagogy, Associate Professor. Department of Methods of Teaching Ukrainian and Foreign Languages and Literature. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1880-4691. E-mail: ponomarova@tanu.pro

[3] Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv – Ukraine. PhD in Philology, Professor. Department of Methods of Teaching Ukrainian and Foreign Languages and Literature. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1167-6810. E-mail: liu-byrkun@nuos.pro

da localização de exemplos no mesmo texto, a leitura sintópica desenvolve o pensamento crítico na medida em que (desde que) se concentre nas habilidades dos alunos para comparar e contrastar diferentes textos que tratam de um mesmo tópico, para expressar ideias sofisticadas, para integrar ou sintetizar as ideias de fontes múltiplas e para formular argumentos originais. Os objetivos do artigo são determinar as etapas do processo de aprendizagem descrito, a estrutura de cada etapa proposta e desenvolver o sistema de exercícios correspondente para dominar as habilidades de competência mencionadas e desenvolver o pensamento crítico nos alunos. A pesquisa traz implicações pedagógicas para a sala de aula de escolas de inglês, sugerindo que os professores de línguas empreguem o ensino explícito de estratégias de leitura que facilitam a leitura crítica e desenvolvem habilidades de pensamento crítico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Escola de ensino avançado. Pensamento crítico. Habilidades de pensamento. Estratégias de leitura. Sistema de exercícios.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo investigar el uso de las formas interactivas y los métodos del enfoque de lectura sintópica en el aula de la escuela superior de inglés para mejorar las habilidades cognitivas y la competencia de los estudiantes en lectura, así como para desarrollar el pensamiento crítico. Mientras que la lectura analítica involucra principalmente las actividades de los estudiantes, como la argumentación, el análisis y la evaluación de un texto determinado a través de la búsqueda de ejemplos en el mismo texto, la lectura sintópica desarrolla el pensamiento crítico siempre que se concentre en las habilidades de los estudiantes para comparar. y contrastar diferentes textos que tratan de un mismo tema, para expresar ideas sofisticadas, para integrar o sintetizar las ideas de múltiples fuentes y para formular argumentos originales. Los objetivos del artículo son determinar las etapas del proceso de aprendizaje descrito, la estructura de cada etapa propuesta y desarrollar el correspondiente sistema de ejercicios para el dominio de las competencias mencionadas y desarrollar el pensamiento crítico en los estudiantes. La investigación extrae implicaciones pedagógicas para el aula de una escuela superior de inglés, lo que sugiere que los profesores de idiomas emplean la enseñanza explícita de estrategias de lectura que facilitan la lectura crítica y desarrollan habilidades de pensamiento crítico.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Colegio. Pensamiento crítico. Habilidades de pensamiento. Estrategias de lectura. Sistema de ejercicios.*

Introduction

Teaching methodology develops as an attempt of the teachers to adjust to the requirements and needs of the constantly changing and increasingly complicating society. The present day demands constant changes in the approaches to teaching facing the rapid world competition in which reading becomes one of the particular concerns of the English teachers and senior school students. The analysis of the recent publications shows that the subject of pedagogical interest of the Ukrainian scholars in the educational sphere is the study of new effective and efficient ways of creating an interactive learning environment in the context of developing more effective tools for developing critical thinking in senior school students

(DENISENKO *et al.*, 2007; MARYMONSKA, 2014; CATTO *et al.*, 2017; GUNAWARDENA *et al.*, 2017; MURAVEVA; ELICES AGUDO, 2017; DAVIS *et al.*, 2018; SWAMINATHAN *et al.*, 2018; BYRKUN, 2019; TOSTE *et al.*, 2019; KAVYTSKA *et al.*, 2020; MOSENKIS *et al.*, 2020). The problem of critical thinking development is occupying a leading position in educational systems since the 1950s (BLOOM *et al.*, 1956; SCRIVEN, 1976; KLEIN, 2011). The students' ability to think critically has become extremely popular recently (HARRIS, 2006; ALTIN; SARACALOĞLU, 2018; BAKAR *et al.*, 2019; BREVIK, 2019; ZHANG *et al.*, 2019). The challenges of the process of critical thinking development process and human limitations affecting it was studied by Richards J. Heuer (1999). The targeted students' ability has appeared to be in the focus of scholars' interest in the educational field (O'CONNOR *et al.*, 2017; FOSTER, 2017; BOARDMAN *et al.*, 2018; PONOMAROVA; GANDZURA, 2018).

Thus, the newly developed Syntopical reading approach can increase motivation and stimulate learning students' activities when applied through the specially worked out system of reading tasks, it helps develop critical thinking in students and their ability to analyze, synthesize the ideas, and develop arguments and criticize or contrast the ideas. The study grounds on the idea, that the psychophysiological basis of reading is the operation of visual perception of the text and its understanding. When we read, the information is perceived by the reader through the visual channel, where the crucial role is performed by visual sense organs, which activate the internal speech-motor analyzer causing repeating the received information in our inner speech. The last activates associations and opens the possibility to connect the received ideas with the background knowledge giving the room for critical thinking development. The idea of applying the Syntopical reading approach aims at widening the field of the students' associations while presenting more than one text for interpreting that leads to an increase in the number of associations possible.

Thus, the following are to be considered as the findings of the conducted research:

1. The proposed stages of classwork with the texts for teaching reading by applying the Syntopical approach to it with senior school students. These stages include the students' preliminary work with the texts at the pre-reading stage through Pre-reading tasks, then the text reading stage, that takes place at the pre-text stage through while-reading tasks, and the checking and assessment of reading comprehension stage, that is carried out at the post-text stage through post-reading tasks involving directly the critical thinking development.

2. The last stage involves the transition from the simple text interpretation to the development of the critical thinking ability of the students, paraphrasing, adherence to a publication format, and confidence in academic writing. However, the effective and efficient

tools of critical thinking development in senior school students are currently being under investigation. Therefore, the objective of our study included evaluation and assessment of the developed system of exercises and identification of the degree of the proposed approach effectiveness.

The objectives of the article are to determine the stages of the described learning process, the structure of every proposed stage, and to develop the corresponding system of exercises for mastering the mentioned competence skills.

A new approach to the reading competence formation, the Syntopic reading, was described in detail by Mortimer Jerome Adler and Charles Van Doren in their book "How to Read a Book" (ADLER; DOREN, 1997). In it, the researchers presented a wide range of theories and practices guiding the transition of readers from analytical reading to its highest degree, syntopic, or comparative reading. The essence of the proposed method is to critically process several text sources of the same subject. This opens the possibility for the reader to compare and contrast the same information while reading the texts, presented by different authors where they are considering the same matter but from positions, the texts may be quite biased or incomplete, emotionally colored, etc., The reader can interpret the information using his\her background knowledge, general erudition or his\her IQ, and summarizing the obtained information to be able to create his\her own idea of the matter presented in the mentioned texts. Such approach develops students' critical thinking, which was discussed in detail by Craig Walton in Six Steps of Critical Thinking based on Larry Wright's Practical Reasoning (BAKAR *et al.*, 2019).

Materials and methods

The hypothesis of the conducted research assumes that the use of the proposed system of exercises helps develop critical thinking in senior school students. The described research was conducted applying general scientific theoretical and empirical methods (the last included pedagogical observation, questioning and conducting the experimental study); statistical methods (such as quantitative and qualitative analysis of experimental results) of research and analysis of the results according to the objective of each stage.

According to the general structure of the pedagogical experiment, we included three main stages: the diagnostic (that involved primary diagnosis of the level of critical thinking in senior school students' competence), formative and final stages. The research involved the following experimental methods: questioning, interviewing students, testing reading

competencies at each stage of the work, laboratory research work, computer processing of research results; statistical processing methods of research results.

The general sample population of the survey conducted in 2018-2020 were 200 students including 50 students from the secondary school # 277 with in-depth study of foreign languages (Desnianskyi district, Kyiv), 50 students from the secondary school # 276 (Desnianskyi district, Kyiv), 50 students from the secondary school # 152 with in-depth study of English language (Desnianskyi district, Kyiv), 50 students from Educational Complex # 39 (Desnianskyi district, Kyiv). According to the tasks of the research and the main characteristics of the teaching process, the following structural components of students' competencies were distinguished: motivational, cognitive, and personal ones. These components were later considered as the basis for distinguishing the basic, progressive and creative levels of the above-mentioned students' competence development.

The study was prolonged (the experiment took one year), and included such stages as organizational, summative, formative and final ones. At the organizational stage, we studied and analyzed the state of the elaboration of the studied problem, to provide evidence to support the reasonability of applying the Syntopical reading approach to senior school students for their critical thinking development, worked out an experimental model that included the described earlier system of specially developed exercises. With the aim to reach the objectives of the study under attention we worked out a set of reading tests (with seven control points) for the students of both experimental groups to determine the level of reading preparedness of the students to master the proposed Syntopical reading approach. The students' tests results were calculated for statistical processing of the experimental data.

The model of teaching the Syntopical reading approach to senior school students was elaborated. Thus, taking into consideration five steps of the Syntopical reading proposed by Michael Scriven (SCRIVEN, 1976) the following model was elaborated. With the assumption that all levels of reading are cumulative, where each higher level includes all previous or lower ones we started with cursory reading. This type of reading technique helps prepare students for the first step of analytical reading, which consists of the following tasks: the students are to familiarize with the title, style, genre of the book, manner of writing and the language and draw a plan of its structure. This type serves as the pre-step for the second one, the aim of which is to prepare the students for the interpreting of the book content via finding common ground with its author, clarifying key points and analyzing the arguments. These are preparatory stages for analytical reading and critical thinking development. However, we consider this stage as a powerful tool for critical thinking development.

The second step of analytical reading involved the author's argument construction. The main task of this stage was to teach students to take notes and to understand specific expressions and terms used by the author. At this stage, the students learn to find the key ideas of the author and try to understand them from the author's view, find justifications for the author's conclusions, find the author's arguments as if they did that instead of the author. For that the students are urged to analyze the text, raise questions, and interpret the author's position.

The third step of reading prepares the reader to be able to criticize the book. According to Adler, when the reader reaches a certain level of understanding of the book, he can evaluate the book (ADLER; DOREN, 1997). At this stage, the students can express their assumptions accurately, formulating good reasons for their critical judgment. This method is referred to as Structure-Proposal-Evaluation one.

The fourth step is the type of analytical reading students stop skimming the text and simple grasping of information. They are urged to apply critical thinking to interpret the meaning and find associations. At this stage, they perform the following tasks: they are given 3-4 texts for reading. Then, they must identify the main idea of each one and to construct a plan on its basis. After that, the next task is to identify the problems and author's points and reasons for which the students work with the terms and keywords used by the author to be able to fully comprehend the important statements of the author; his/her arguments and positions; or to determine whether the author could solve the problems or lacked information, etc.

The fifth step is the Syntopical reading stage. The students find key sentences for understanding the authors' arguments and positions. At this stage, students ask questions to identify the idea of every author of the proposed texts for consideration, they formulate the questions so that in most works the answers coincide and, in each text, there was an answer to them. Some of the texts are discarded at this stage. Then the students work with the texts contrasting different answers, which can be supported by convincing arguments.

Thoughtful analysis of the problem presented in the texts can serve as the basis for further fruitful work with it. The main idea of the stage is to make students rely upon their own arguments inferred from the texts read and analyze how they correlate with information obtained.

The proposed system of work on the syntopical reading of texts is only one of the possible options for work in the context of intercultural didactics and the personal-activity approach to learning a foreign language. Practice proves that such a system of syntopical reading and processing of foreign texts increases students' interest in it, teaches them to

analytically comprehend the information in the texts. According to the described sequence of steps, the model of teaching Syntopical reading to students was formulated (YILDIRIM, 2020).

The first stage objective is to create an appropriate linguistic and situational atmosphere for the perception of several texts on similar topics. We call this stage 'Operational-cognitive'. It involves pre-text exercises. The purpose of the further activity is to focus on the search for certain information from the different texts, to activate pupils' attention and memory, awareness of the specific structure of each of the proposed texts. The purpose of the control and evaluation stage is to reveal the depth of students' understanding of the texts. The stage of creative re-thinking offers post-text exercises.

The teaching of syntopical reading in English to high school students in the context of specialized training will be more effective under the following conditions:

• Step-by-step organization of teaching syntopic reading in English according to the proposed model;

• Theoretically substantiated selection of educational material – popular science texts;

• Use of a specially designed system of exercises;

• Selection of the optimal variant of the organization of teaching of syntopic reading in English at the preparatory, executive, and critical-comparative stages.

Results and discussion

At the organizational stage, the preparation and organization of experimental training were done. It involved, first of all, the development and formulation of a hypothesis of the experimental study, based on the basic theoretical principles of teaching Syntopical reading to senior school students according to the proposed Model.

The hypothesis of the experimental study. The teaching of syntopic reading in English to senior school students in the context of specialized training will be more effective under the following conditions:

1. Step-by-step organization of teaching syntopical reading in English according to the worked-out model;

2. Theoretically substantiated selection of educational material which included popular science fiction texts;

3. The whole process was based on the specially designed system of exercises;

4.   The final selection of the optimal method of the organization of syntopical reading teaching technique at the preparatory, executive, and critical-comparative stages.

Based on the above-described hypothesis, we expected the following consequence: as a result of applying the proposed method of teaching syntopic reading in English, the targeted senior school students will be able to read texts at a level that will reach and exceed the conditional learning rate of 0.7 according to Bezpalko index.

The formulated hypothesis was tested by us during a natural methodical experiment, which was conducted on the basis of secondary schools No 276 and No 152 (Kyiv, Ukraine) during the second semester (January – May) in 2018. The participants of the experiment were students of 11th grades of the philological profile, who major in the discipline "English". The structure of the methodological experiment is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The structure of the methodological experiment

Stages of experimental training	dates	Number of lessons	Aim of the stage
Pre-experimental test	16.01.2018	1 lesson	To determine the initial level of syntopic reading skills formation
	16.01.2018	1 lesson	
	17.01.2018	1 lesson	
	17.01.2018	1 lesson	
Experimental training	18.01.2018 – 16.05.2018	18 lessons (7,2 contact hours)	To check the effectiveness of the proposed method
Post-experimental test	17.05.2018	1 lesson	determine the final level of syntopic reading skills
	17.05.2018	1 lesson	
	18.05.2018	1 lesson	
	18.05.2018	1 lesson	

Source: Devised by the authors

Non-variational conditions in EGs (experimental groups) were the populations in groups and their number, the manner of experimental research conduct during the experimental study based on the same system of exercises; one and the same trainer (organizer of the experimental study); the level of pre- and post-experimental test and the use of the same forms of control. Variational conditions included the organization of propaedeutic and preparatory stages of teaching syntopic reading in English to senior school students (AKBULUT, 2020):

Option A – provided for the consistent training of students of syntopic reading, first at the propaedeutic (acquisition of knowledge), and then at the preparatory (skills formation) stages of teaching syntopic reading; Option B – provided for parallel teaching of students of

syntopic reading at the propaedeutic (acquisition of knowledge) and preparatory (formation of skills) stages of teaching syntopic reading. Based on the above provisions, we have identified specific tasks of the experimental study:

1. To work out materials and conduct a pre-experimental test to determine the initial level of senior school students' skills formation in syntopic reading;

2. To conduct experimental teaching of syntopic reading in English to senior school students on the basis of the developed system of exercises to determine the effectiveness of the methods proposed and to establish the most effective organization of preparatory stage of training;

3. To conduct a post-experimental test to determine the final level of formation of skills of senior school students in syntopic reading;

4. To process and interpret the results of the experimental training to determine the effectiveness of the proposed method of teaching syntopical reading to senior school students;

5. To formulate the conclusions on the effectiveness of the developed method of teaching syntopic reading in English to senior school students, as well as to determine the optimal organization of preparatory stage of teaching syntopic reading.

At the summative stage, the students of the EG-1, EG – 2, EG – 3 and EG-4 were diagnosed and a sample study was done, the data obtained in the summative measurement were analyzed. The types of testing tasks to test syntopic reading skills in pre- and post-experimental stages are presented in Table 2.

The obtained pre-experimental stage test results are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Types of test tasks to test skills in syntopic reading at pre- and post-experimental stages

Reading skills stages	Test task format	Number of tasks	Max. score
Elementary/inspectional reading	Words matching / explaining the meaning of the words	1	5
Analytical reading	Detailing information of texts	1	10
Critical-comparative reading (Syntopical reading)	Revitalization of Feedback	1	15
Total number of points per test			30

Source: Devised by the authors

Table 3. The mean distribution of points for the test of the pre-experimental stage in the experimental groups for three tasks

Groups	The mean distribution of points for each task			Summarized mean for 3 tasks (max. 30p)	Mean learning rate for 3 tasks (0,7)
	1. elementary/ inspectional reading (5p.)	2. analytical reading (10p.)	3. syntopical reading (15p.)		
EG-1	3.69	7.23	7.3	18.23	0.6
EG-2	3.5	6.78	6.28	16.57	0.55
EG-3	4	7.38	6.61	17.92	0.59
EG-4	3.08	5.69	7.46	16.2	0.54

Source: Devised by the authors

As is seen from Table 3, the obtained results in reading in EG-1 were 0.6, in EG-2 were 0.55, in EG-3 were 0.59 and in EG-4 were 0.54, they were low and did not reach a minimum satisfactory level that is equal to 0.7 learning rate according to Bezpalko. Students experienced significant difficulties in performing tasks to determine the details of the texts. Slightly higher rates characterized the ability to understand the text at the elementary/inspectional reading level, that means, to understand its general content; however, the students made serious mistakes in those tasks as well.

Thus, the results of the pre-experimental test made it possible to conclude that the targeted students did not have sufficiently developed reading skills to work with text (average learning rate is lower than the minimum sufficient learning rate 0.7), which proved the need to apply the special sets of exercises.

So, we worked with target groups of students using the described earlier system of different types of exercises for each stage of work with specially prepared sets of educational texts correlating with the certain stage objectives. Having completed the experimental training, the students from EG groups performed a post-experimental test, the tasks of which were similar to the tasks of the pre-experimental one. The results of the post-experimental test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The mean distribution of points for the test of the post-experimental stage in the experimental groups for three tasks

Groups	Mean distribution of points for each task			Summarized mean for 3 tasks (max. 30p)	Mean learning rate for 3 tasks (0,7)
	1. elementary/ inspectional reading (5p.)	2. analytical reading (10p.)	3. syntopical reading (15p.)		
EG-1	4.77	9.84	12.92	27.5	0.92
EG-2	4.43	9	10.78	24.07	0.8
EG-3	4.54	9.85	13.77	28.15	0.93
EG-4	4.15	8.92	11.53	24.6	0.82

Source: Devised by the authors

According to the table, the application of the developed system of exercises for teaching syntopic reading in all experimental groups led to an increase in the level of skills and abilities of students in syntopic reading. This conclusion is based on the following facts:

1.   The target students in all experimental groups achieved a sufficient learning rate 0.7 after the experimental training;

2.   The indicators for all types of reading skills increased significantly demonstrating difference in EG-1 – 1.5 times, in EG-2 – 1.4 times, in EG-3 – 1.6 times, in EG-4 – 1.5 times.

This dynamics of changes in the level of senior school students' syntopic reading skills formation is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *The dynamics of changes in the level of senior school students' syntopic reading skills formation*

Groups	Mean learning rate		Increase in learning rate
	pre-experimental stage	post-experimental stage	
EG-1	0.61	0.92	0.31
EG-2	0.55	0.8	0.25
EG-3	0.59	0.93	0.34
EG-4	0.54	0.82	0.28

Source: Devised by the authors

Figure 1 shows summarized distribution of mean learning rates increase in experimental groups EG1-EG4 of students.

Figure 1. Summarized distribution of mean learning rates increase in experimental groups EG1-EG4 of students
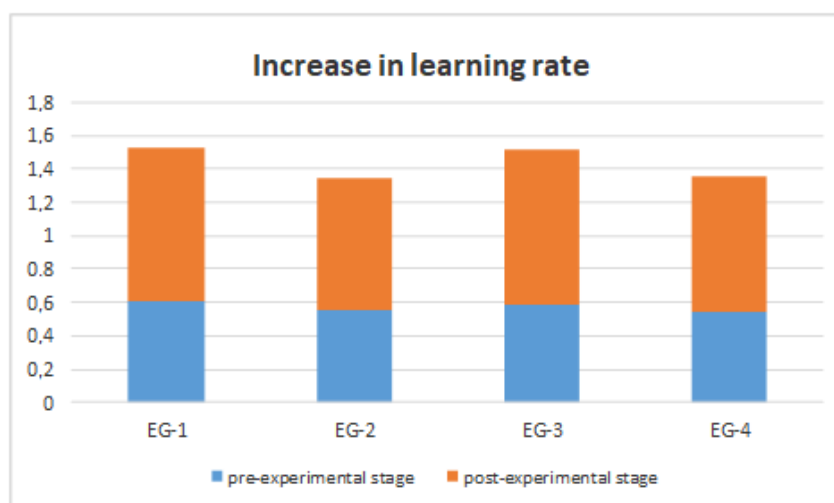
Source: Devised by the authors

The numerical indicators reflect the effectiveness of the proposed system of theoretically substantiated selection of educational materials under the condition that the whole process is grounded on the specially designed system of exercises and the usage of the described optimal method of the organization of syntopical reading teaching technique at the preparatory, executive, and critical-comparative stages.

Conclusions

It should be noted that the proposed approach (the use of the syntopical reading approach to teaching high school students reading in English) can be considered as one of the possible approaches to critical thinking development, and cannot comprise all the possible solutions to this problem. The other approaches to critical thinking development require further research.

The research aimed at finding new ways of the effective development of critical thinking of senior school students through a specially developed system of exercises through the application of the transitional six step model from the analytical to the synoptical type of reading. The obtained results of the conducted experimental study showed that the proposed approach appeared to be a powerful tool in the creation of the learning environment, which significantly boosts the senior school students' ability to improve the level of critical thinking and reading competence through the specially designed system of exercises. Although, the experiment does not exhaust the full depth of the question and shows that there are other factors

and approaches that can possibly help a further stable development and deepening of critical thinking of senior school students.

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