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DIGITAL SOCRATIC DIALOGUE AS A TOOL FOR FOSTERING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING IN PHILOSOPHY CLASSES

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Abstract: The thesis examines the Socratic method, as presented in Plato's Meno, as a didactic resource for developing university students' critical thinking in philosophy classes delivered with digital tools. Aporia is interpreted as a productive state of cognitive tension rather than a failure of learning, and the possibilities of chat and forum environments for sustaining a slow, written Socratic dialogue are analysed. The author proposes a three-stage digital Socratic sequence "elicit – unsettle – rebuild", based on Paul–Elder questioning and L.S. Vygotsky's idea of the zone of proximal development.

Keywords: Socratic dialogue, critical thinking, aporia, philosophy teaching, online forum, Paul–Elder questioning, zone of proximal development

Annotatsiya: Tezisda Platonning "Menon" dialogida tasvirlangan Sokrat metodi raqamli vositalar yordamida o'tiladigan falsafa mashg'ulotlarida talabalarning tanqidiy fikrlashini rivojlantirish uchun didaktik resurs sifatida ko'rib chiqiladi. Aporiya o'quv jarayonidagi muvaffaqiyatsizlik emas, balki samarali kognitiv taranglik holati sifatida talqin qilinadi, chat va forum muhitlarining sekin, yozma sokratik muloqotni qo'llab-quvvatlash imkoniyatlari tahlil etiladi. Muallif tomonidan Paul–Elder savollari va L.S. Vygotskiyning yaqin rivojlanish zonasi g'oyasiga asoslangan "aniqlash – larzaga solish – qayta qurish" uch bosqichli raqamli sokratik ketma-ketlik taklif etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: sokratik dialog, tanqidiy fikrlash, aporiya, falsafa o'qitish, onlayn forum, Paul–Elder savollari, yaqin rivojlanish zonasi

Аннотация: В тезисах сократический метод, представленный в диалоге Платона «Менон», рассматривается как дидактический ресурс развития критического мышления студентов на занятиях по философии с использованием цифровых средств. Апория трактуется не как неудача обучения, а как продуктивное состояние когнитивного напряжения; анализируются возможности чатов и форумов для поддержания медленного письменного сократического диалога. Автором предложена трёхэтапная цифровая сократическая последовательность «выявление – расшатывание – перестройка», основанная на вопросах Пола–Элдера и идее зоны ближайшего развития Л.С. Выготского.

Ключевые слова: сократический диалог, критическое мышление, апория, преподавание философии, онлайн-форум, вопросы Пола–Элдера, зона ближайшего развития

Introduction

What does a student learn when a philosophy seminar ends with the words "So we still do not know what virtue is"? For many first-year students such an ending looks like a lesson that has gone wrong: they expect a definition to write down, not a question to carry home. Yet this very ending is the core of the Socratic tradition, and it is exactly what a course meant to develop critical thinking

should aim for. In Uzbekistan, philosophy is taught as a general education subject across all fields of study, and the Concept for the development of higher education until 2030 sets the task of training specialists capable of independent and critical thought [1]. The question is how the old method of Socrates can work in a digital learning environment, where students are used to quick answers and short messages.

Main part

In Plato's Meno, Meno confidently offers several definitions of virtue, and each of them collapses under Socrates' questions until Meno compares Socrates to a torpedo fish that numbs whoever touches it [2]. This state of perplexity – aporia – is not presented as a defeat. In the episode with the slave boy, Socrates shows that only after the boy realises that his first answer about doubling the square is wrong does he become ready to search for the correct one. Pedagogically, aporia is the moment when a learner's confident but unexamined belief loses its stability, and the need for reasoning, not memorisation, appears. A philosophy teacher who skips this moment by providing a ready-made definition also skips the point where critical thinking begins.

The difficulty is that in a live seminar the Socratic method depends heavily on the teacher's improvisation and on the courage of a few active students. The rest of the group often watches the dialogue rather than takes part in it. Here digital tools offer an important change: they turn the dialogue from an oral performance into a written, slow and shared process. In a Moodle forum, a Telegram study group or a shared Google Docs document, every student can formulate an answer, the teacher can respond to each answer with a targeted question, and the whole chain of reasoning remains visible and can be revisited. D.R. Garrison, T. Anderson and W. Archer showed that text-based communication can support "cognitive presence", which develops through the phases of a triggering event, exploration, integration and resolution [6]. The Socratic dialogue fits this cycle well: the opening question is the trigger, the refutation of first answers is exploration, and the search for a better formulation is integration.

To keep the teacher's questions from becoming random, it is useful to rely on R. Paul and L. Elder's framework. They describe the elements of thought (purpose, question, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications and point of view) and the intellectual standards by which thinking is assessed: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness [3]. These standards translate directly into Socratic prompts: "What exactly do you mean by...?" (clarity), "How could we check this?" (accuracy), "What follows if this is true?" (implications), "How would someone who disagrees see this?" (point of view). P.A. Facione's Delphi Report, which lists interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and self-regulation as core critical thinking skills [5], allows the teacher to see which skill each question is training.

The theoretical justification for the teacher's role comes from L.S. Vygotsky. His concept of the zone of proximal development describes the distance between what a learner can do alone and what he or she can do with the guidance of a more experienced partner, and his analysis of thinking and speech shows how dialogue, once external, becomes an internal tool of thought [4]. The Socratic question works exactly in this zone: it does not give the answer, but it gives the step that the student cannot yet take alone. The written form strengthens this effect, because the student must turn an intuition into a sentence that others can examine.

On this basis, the author proposes a three-stage digital Socratic sequence "elicit – unsettle – rebuild". At the elicit stage, the teacher posts a short problem question in a Moodle forum configured so that a student can see classmates' replies only after posting his or her own answer; this protects independent first judgements. For example, in the topic "Theory of knowledge" the question might be: "Can a person know something that he cannot prove?" At the unsettle stage, the teacher and then the students themselves answer selected posts with Paul–Elder questions or counterexamples, aiming not to ridicule but to show the limits of each first definition; the goal of this stage is a shared, recorded

aporia. At the rebuild stage, students work in small groups in a shared document to produce an improved formulation, explicitly stating which assumption they abandoned and which objection they took into account. The sequence ends with a short individual reflection: "What did I believe at the beginning, and why do I believe something different now?" Classical sources, including the questions about knowledge and the soul raised in the works of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, can serve as material for the rebuild stage, showing students that their aporia has a long intellectual history.

The meta-analysis by P.C. Abrami and colleagues supports this design: the strongest effects on critical thinking were found when dialogue, authentic problems and mentoring were combined [7]. The proposed sequence contains all three. At the same time, its limitations should be noted. Written dialogue is slower and can lose the emotional intensity of a live discussion; some students may experience aporia as humiliation if the norms of respectful questioning are not set in advance; and the teacher's workload grows, since each answer needs a thoughtful reply. The effectiveness of the sequence will be tested in experimental work [the author's experimental data will be added].

Conclusion

1. Aporia should be treated as a planned stage of learning in philosophy, not as a failure of explanation. 2. Chat and forum environments make the Socratic dialogue slower, written and inclusive, allowing every student to take part and the reasoning to remain visible. 3. Paul–Elder elements of thought and intellectual standards provide a systematic bank of Socratic questions. 4. The author's sequence "elicit – unsettle – rebuild" can be introduced into seminars on the theory of knowledge, ontology and ethics; for this purpose it is recommended to prepare a bank of Socratic questions for each topic and to run short workshops for teachers on facilitating written dialogue.

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