



Suggestopedia and Its Application in Different Types of Learners

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Abstract

Suggestopedia is a language learning method developed by Bulgarian psychiatrist and educator Georgi Lozanov who believed that applying suggestopedia to foreign/second language teaching can greatly enhance learners' learning efficiency and performance. In this paper, the definition of four stages of suggestopedia will be presented. Its application in kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners will also be elaborated on to show the effectiveness of suggestopedia in ESL/EFL classes.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Suggestopedia, Application, Kinesthetic Learners, Visual Learners, Auditory Learners

1. Introduction

Many teachers from different disciplines have made great efforts to find teaching methods suitable for students, and some of them have created their own teaching methods that can meet the existing teaching criteria. Suggestopedia targets the subconscious mind and is designed to help students overcome various potential psychological barriers that negatively affect their learning before entering the classroom, thereby promoting the students' learning process (Larsen and Anderson, 2011) [1].

Developed by Bulgarian educator Lozanov, suggestopedia is a foreign/second language teaching method that focuses on accelerating the learning process by providing students with a comfortable classroom environment (Richards and

Schmidt, 2010) [2]. Lozanov (2009) [3] believes that applying suggestopedia to foreign/second language teaching can speed up language learning three to five times compared with traditional teaching methods. However, according to Scovel, suggestopedia is pseudoscience without scientific basis (Scovel, 1979) [4]. Collecting and analyzing different linguists' opinions on a teaching method through general principles can help teachers use elements that are generally considered beneficial and avoid elements that are not.

The paper will be divided into four parts: In the first part, the researcher will provide a definition of suggestopedia to give it a clear explanation. Literature review will be the second part that provides background information on suggestopedia, including the origin of the method, its developer, and its principles. The third part will discuss the four stages of suggestopedia which are presentation stage, concert session, elaboration stage, and practice stage. The last part will specify the application of suggestopedia in three different types of learners, namely, kinesthetic learners, visual learners, and auditory learners.

2. The Concept of Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is a method developed by Bulgarian psychiatrist and educator Georgi Lozanov. It is a learning method derived from suggestology, which Lozanov describes as a "science concerned with the systematic study of the irrational and/or unconscious influences to which human beings continually respond" (Steviek, 1976) [5]. Suggestopedia attempts to harness these influences and redirect them to optimize learning. The most striking features of suggestopedia are the decoration, furniture and arrangement of the classroom, the use of music, and the authoritative behavior of the teacher.

3. Literature Review

Since people tended to learn foreign/second languages through formal education, language teaching methods have experienced many changes throughout history (Zainuddin *et al.*, 2011) [6]. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, these methods originally associated with learning Greek and Latin gradually developed, they taught the language primarily through grammar, literature, and translation (Titone, 1968) [7]. Subsequently, the focus of language teaching methods shifted to covering different aspects of the target language.

By the twentieth century, more foreign/second language teaching methods emerged that focused on the functional and interactional features of language rather than the structural and grammatical features (Richards and Rogers, 2014) [8]. Suggestopedia is one of them. It does not focus on the structural teaching of foreign/second language but tends to demonstrate the language to foreign/second language learners through suggestive teaching. It gives priority to psychological and humanistic factors that are inadvertently neglected or intentionally ignored by traditional or conventional foreign language teaching methods.

According to Richards and Schmidt (2010) [2], suggestopedia is the teaching

application of suggestology, which applies the influence of suggestion on human behavior. It is also called suggestopedy, desuggestopedia or the Lozanov method. The first two terms are a combination of two words, suggestion and pedagogy. The latter term comes from the developer of the method, Professor Georgi Lozanov, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, brain physiologist and educator. He studied psychological suggestion and applied his newly developed suggestology to pedagogy. Lozanov (1978) [9] defined suggestology as “the science or art of liberating and stimulating the personality either under guidance or alone” and considered suggestopedia as “suggestology applied in the teaching process”. Additionally, the term “desuggestopedia” is now used to refer to the removal of any potential constraints on learning (Larsen and Anderson, 2011) [1].

In 1978, UNESCO considered suggestopedia extremely desirable and recommended that it could be used throughout the world (Lozanov.org, 2009) [3]. Foreign language researchers who have studied and used this method have reported some positive results in the field of teaching (Lozanov, 1978) [9]. Their findings suggest that this approach provides the necessary combination of emotional and humanistic factors in foreign language classrooms. Referring to its definition, this method combines the principles of suggestion with those of pedagogy. Since this approach involves both the emotional or affective as well as the cognitive and psychomotor aspects of learning, it is often referred to as psychotherapy – a mental health education process (Lozanov, 1978) [9].

Suggestopedia is based on three interrelated and interacting key principles summarized as follows: First, the principle of pleasure, which refers to the sense of joy and lack of anxiety in the teaching and learning atmosphere. Lozanov (1978) [9] explained that creating a pleasant learning atmosphere can help students reduce tension, fear, anxiety and other negative emotions about learning. These emotions exist in most traditional language classrooms and are usually caused by “being unconfident resulting from difficulty understanding, remembering, and utilizing the material presented in the course” (Lozanov, 1978) [9].

In addition, the mental and physical pressure brought by traditional classrooms and the related social customs can easily hinder students’ cognitive activities; but when students are in a pleasant and quiet atmosphere, they tend to feel relaxed and happy, and thus can express a strong and lasting motivation to learn. According to Lozanov (1978) [9], the second principle is the “unity of primary and secondary consciousness” and the integration of brain activity, which focuses on viewing the human being as a whole.

In other words, the principles of suggestopedia indicate that the emotional, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects of human development can be viewed as a whole and that these aspects should be integrated through learning and teaching.

The final principle of suggestopedia is suggestive connection, the principle of which comes from the establishment of mutual relationships in psychotherapy practice. In other words, this principle refers to social forms of human learning, such as group learning, collaborative learning, and social learning. Suggestive connections in suggestive group learning can help improve the academic per-

formance of students who learn by suggestopedia. A cooperative environment is conducive to stimulating students' learning potential, as Lozanov said, "The level of suggestive connection is measured by the degree to which students' potential is developed" (Lozanov, 1978) [9].

Suggestopedia is not unique among educational methods, but it is effective in promoting learning. For many students, second language acquisition is not easy, learning a new language can make them fearful and nervous, so teachers start to find the best way to teach. But there may not be a best teaching method, but some methods are more useful than others and tend to produce better teaching results.

4. Four Stages of Suggestopedia

Lozanov (2005) [10] divided suggestopedia into four stages, namely:

4.1. Presentation Stage

The main purpose of this stage is to help students relax and enter a positive state, so students can feel that learning is very easy and fun. In order to make students relax, teachers should arrange students' seats to be more comfortable. When teachers first come into contact with students, they should treat every student in the class with a relaxed and attentive attitude. Teachers no longer perform one-man shows on platform alone, but should encourage students to gradually participate in the classroom communication process and motivate students to voluntarily participate in a common game project. Playing game projects liberates them from boredom, negativity and fear of learning.

4.2. Concert Session

Lozanov divided the concert session into the active session and the passive session.

The first half of the concert session (active session) involves actively presenting the material to be learned. For example, the teacher reads aloud the text to be studied, and the students listen attentively to the teacher's reading. At this stage, the teacher can use some classical music, and the teacher's reading should match the different rhythms of the music. The music selected in the active session should be full of emotion and rich in melody. In the active session, the teacher distributes the translation of the text to the students and informs them that they can read the text and translation while listening to music with the teacher's reading, but there is no need to memorize them. The teacher's reading should be pure, clear, accurate, slow and rhythmic, and the teacher's breathing should also be regular. The active session should last 45 - 50 minutes.

In the second half of the concert session (passive session), the teacher asks the students to close their books and listen to some baroque music while the teacher reads the text quietly to the background music. The music played at this time has been specially selected to put students into the best mental state for easy acquisi-

tion of knowledge. Brown (2007) [11] states that “when Baroque music is played softly, people can absorb a large amount of information due to an increase in alpha brain waves and a decrease in blood pressure and pulse rate”. It can be said that Baroque music increases alpha brain waves, makes students feel relaxed and their brain smarter.

4.3. Elaboration Stage

Elaborating the material being taught actually begins in the first stage. The first words spoken by the teacher have already started the dialogue between students and teachers. For example, the teacher reminded students during class that they would work together to prepare materials for a film they had planned to make. The elaboration stage pays more attention to students’ freedom, and teachers encourage students to release their creativity more. In the elaboration stage, the teacher’s reminders, intonation, application of music and drama unify all stages of the suggestopedia, allowing students to absorb more language knowledge. In addition to music, teachers intentionally incorporate jokes and songs into lessons to help students understand the most difficult parts of the course.

4.4. Practice Stage

The practice stage takes place on the second day of the concert session. Brown (2007) [11] quotes Lozanov as saying that after the concert session, students will quietly leave the classroom. The teacher does not assign any written homework to the students but requires them to read the text before going to bed and after getting up in the morning. At this stage, the teacher will not put any pressure on students, but will only use a series of games, puzzles and other means to allow students to review and consolidate the knowledge they have learned.

5. The Application in Different Types of Learners

Firstly, one of the characteristics of kinesthetic learners is to solve problems by physically working through them. In suggestopedia, there are a lot of hands-on activities such as games and puzzles that are suitable for kinesthetic learners. Secondly, auditory learners enjoy being accompanied by music in their study, while suggestopedia is featured by using music to make learners feel relieved, thus enhancing their learning efficiency. Thirdly, visual learners are likely to memorize more knowledge by seeing graphics or pictures, and teachers can add many a picture to create an ideal class atmosphere for visual learners in suggestopedia. In the following part, the researcher will talk in detail about how to apply suggestopedia in these three different kinds of learners.

5.1. Kinesthetic Learners

Kinesthetic learners actively acquire knowledge by participating in classroom activities such as drama, puppetry, theatre, performance and design. Therefore, suggestopedia creates an ideal environment for kinesthetic learners. They can

actively participate in any activity within the suggestopedia because it matches their learning style. Here are some effective strategies for engaging less motivated kinesthetic students in activities that use suggestopedia:

1) Motivating students by giving attention and rewards rather than punishment. Acceptance of this approach varies by age. This applies to children and teenagers, but it has less of an impact on adults because, at least in some societies and communities, it may be considered an insult to their intelligence.

2) Providing learners with as many learning activities as possible and let students choose which activities to participate in. These activities need to be under the guidance of teachers, otherwise students' understanding is often superficial. The reason for this is that while some learners tend to learn by suggestopedia, they never have the opportunity to learn how to choose what is and is not useful for their learning.

3) Endowing every learner with equal opportunities to participate in classroom ESL/EFL activities. Information communication based on equal dialogue can continuously develop students' initiative and enthusiasm for learning and improve the efficiency of English teaching. Suggestopedia can just help teachers make it happen.

4) Following some effective strategies to maintain control over learners when handling suggestopedia: a) Teachers encourage learners to give up any shyness in activities that require physical movement. b) Teachers should regularly monitor learners' responses and focus on all learners. c) In any activity, teachers must provide appropriate and accurate guidance to learners to avoid causing negative emotions in learners.

5.2. Visual Learners

As the visual cortex of the brain receives new information and identifies and categorizes it, the brain itself begins to encode the information to validate the learning process. As recognition, classification, and learning tasks converge, schemas formed in the brain help process the encoding of new information and relate it to familiar objects known to learners. Learners remember visual images better when they associate them with known schemas. From a scientific perspective, schemas can actually provide a visual memory and learning boost. Although suggestopedia focuses on the use of audio-visual means, some learners in different societies and communities are unable to cope with it. The reason is that the learning process of these students relies on memorization rather than audio-visual means to obtain information. This indicates that they may have some difficulties in dealing with the application of suggestopedia. Teachers can use the following methods within the scope of suggestopedia to motivate these students:

1) Making use of a task list. Students have a lot to do every day, so using a task list to reorganize work is necessary. Task lists also allow students to arrange tasks according to importance to improve efficiency. In a learning environment, this also adds a sense of structure. Students can understand and process content covered in courses or lectures. In a sense, it also summarizes a person's goals and

intentions. Another benefit of a task list is its flexibility. For example, some students code tasks using colors or various shapes and symbols. This can both capture the individual's attention and serve as a guide for them.

2) Adding graphs and charts. Adding graphs and charts to convey ideas is another way to learn effectively. It's the same as using a task list, although it's more time-consuming. Using graphs and charts can help in many areas of personal life and learning. For example, charts can help students keep an eye on their finances and budget. In learning, they can be used to convey ideas and enhance learning. Further, charts can help students develop data literacy. Since charts can be used for a variety of things, students can use data literacy to ask meaningful questions that deepen the learning experience.

3) Mind mapping. Mind mapping is a form of note-taking that is particularly beneficial for visual learning. The idea of mind mapping is to show relationships and connections of people, places, events, etc. This technique is useful for broadly learning specific concepts, but it has other applications as well. Similar to a task list, students can use it to break down tasks, and it can also measure their productivity.

4) Utilizing video. Videos have a way of grabbing people's attention. Everyone has a little visual learning ability, so videos can be of great benefit to us all. It enables students to clearly recreate these stories in their minds. Teachers can encourage students to be creative with their videos. It may be helpful when students record a speaker or teacher, but it may be more beneficial for students to record themselves and create videos explaining certain concepts.

5.3. Auditory Learners

Suggestopedia is a language teaching method that highly supports audio learning in language teaching (Asadi & Berimani, 2015) [12]. Suggestopedia is favored by auditory learners who prefer to listen to music while reading narrative texts. It can make the class enjoyable, teaching not monotonous, and students focused. Music excites students' spatial cognitive nerves through the auditory system, thereby improving their attention levels (Yixuan & Fang, 2021) [13]. Teachers' playing music in class does not affect the students' concentration in learning as it allows their brains to process information easily without any stress (Purba, 2017) [14]. Teachers can facilitate learning for auditory learners by using the following tactics:

1) Choosing the music to use when explaining the material. If the music chosen by the teacher is suitable for the class theme or story content, it can stimulate students' imagination of the story, allowing students to understand and remember the events in the story without any pressure. Through the use of music, suggestopedia creates a pleasant atmosphere, eliminates students' tension, reduces their mental pressure, stimulates students' imagination and memory, and makes their brain work quickly. This method is novel for students who are new to suggestopedia because they have never tried it in other classes before. This novelty can also arouse students' interest in suggestopedia.

2) Recording classes and lectures for auditory learners to listen to later. Teachers support auditory learners' preferred learning style by providing lecture and class recordings. These students can listen to the material multiple times, helping them solidify their understanding of the subject matter. It also encourages self-paced learning, which helps auditory learners who may need more time to process information or prefer to learn at a slower pace. Students listen to the recording multiple times, pausing and rewinding as needed to fully understand, so they can successfully complete homework assignments related to class topics. Recordings enable auditory learners to better process and retain information, thereby improving classroom performance.

3) Incorporating social elements into lesson plans. Creating lessons with social elements can help improve auditory learners' performance by promoting classroom engagement. Auditory learners tend to be active in group activities and enjoy participating in class discussions and activities. By creating lessons with a social element, teachers can encourage students to collaborate and work together, which can help auditory learners gain better understanding by hearing different perspectives and participating in discussions. By incorporating a social element, students can develop a sense of community in the classroom. Auditory learners in the classroom are capable of being more engaged and perform better on relevant assignments and assessments.

4) Asking auditory learners to answer questions. Asking auditory learners to answer questions in class can have a positive impact on their academic performance. By doing this, teachers can validate their preferred learning style, which helps them feel more confident and motivated to participate in class. Additionally, hearing information repeatedly can help auditory learners retain it better. When they are asked to answer questions, they are more likely to remember the concept in the future. When teachers ask auditory learners to answer questions, they can summarize the information they heard and explain it in their own words, which reinforces their learning style and helps them deepen their understanding of the topic.

6. Conclusion

In the paper, the researcher gives a definition of suggestopedia, specifies its four different stages and presents its application in three different types of learners. However, the following limitations still exist within the research: On the one hand, although suggestopedia is a desirable approach for ESL/EFL class, there are certain demerits that teachers need to pay attention to and keep away from. On the other hand, there are more types of learners besides kinesthetic, visual and auditory learners, suggestopedia's application in other types of learners still deserves more focus and research. Also, within the scope of suggestopedia, there are other issues that worth researching, for example, how to provide teachers with professional training which endows them with the operating procedures and theoretical essence of suggestopedia, how to encourage students to form in-

terest groups in their spare time and use suggestopedia to strengthen memory and improve learning efficiency, and how to skillfully integrate suggestopedia with other teaching methods so as to give full play to its brilliance.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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