



THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUGGESTOPEDIA IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGE CONTEXTS

Suyunova Mokhinur

MA Student Uzbekistan State World Languages University

ABSTRACT

This paper is a qualitative study and aims to explain the nature of the method of Suggestopedia as a whole together with defining core principles of this method. It further discusses the overall findings of previous studies on effectiveness of Suggestopedia in different language contexts that has attempted to improve a particular language aspect with the help of this method.

KEYWORDS

the brain function model, suggestology, suggestive norms, Suggestopedia

INTRODUCTION

Suggestopedia has been explained in many publications as one of the particular modern era methods, and was once known for its effectiveness in facilitating memory retention and speed in students' acquisition of teaching material. Most textbooks of language teaching methodology, such as Stevick (1980), Richards and Rodgers (1986) and Nunan (1991), include Suggestopedia as one of the must-know terms in the history of the field. However, though it is a well-known teaching method, courses currently based on Suggestopedia are handful. This is partly because Suggestopedia is believed to require special skills to teach and is a difficult method to use (Osman, 2017). In addition, teachers are not quite sure about what they should do in Suggestopedia classes even after they have read publications about Suggestopedia, and they are unsure what elements in actual classroom activities will bring about what suggestive effect. This study, therefore, contributes to our knowledge of Suggestopedia, a teaching method receiving increasing attention from researchers of second language learning and teaching. Through concepts relating to semiotics/semiology and affordance that can be applied to analyze the course design and teaching practice in a Suggestopedic language course, a proper guidance is shown to teachers to follow in a suggestopedic class. The teacher's utterances, behavior, teaching materials and course structure are observed and analyzed. Elements identified in the observation are examined in their symbolic function, how these signs are interpreted, in what context and what kind of semiotic environment is created in the introductory language course. As the core of Suggestopedia, Lozanov provided his learners with an understanding about "the natural function of the brain". To explain the nature of "the natural function of the brain" and know how a teacher expects students to abandon their old commonsense ideas to form a new one, he collected contemporary existing facts about the brain and used them as the basis of his model of the brain function. This is generalized as the follows;

1) the brain naturally wants to learn new things and feels happiness when it learns;

- 2) the brain naturally recognizes all information at once no matter which area (central or peripheral) of consciousness the information is sent. The brain naturally recalls the information to which the brain has been exposed most. In this sense, the brain function of memorizing is already at its maximum, therefore, the ability to recall the information should be developed.
- 3) The conscious plane and the paraconscious (not conscious) plane are the two conceptual planes on which mental operations take place in the brain. For the purpose of sustaining the overall activity in the brain, both planes reside in parallel and communicate with one another continually. A significant amount of information kept in the paraconscious region is necessary to maintain conscious mental activity and reaction. On the paraconscious level, brain activity is largely instinctive, emotive, and limitless. The brain grows dissatisfied when it must do demanding conscious mental tasks without having enough mental reserves in the paraconscious region.
- 4) One area of the brain can instantly transmit information to other sections of the brain. The propagation of information across the brain cannot be stopped. As a result, the brain struggles to distinguish between reasoning and emotion, for instance. It's effective at association.
- 5) In general, the brain enjoys surprises and alterations to some extent. It dislikes mechanical repetition and linear outcomes that are quite predictable. But the brain also prefers a setting that is predictable and safe. In other words, when there is no threat, the brain is inherently interested and creative.
- 6) Multiple personalities are often created by the brain. A typical, healthy individual experiences a variety of personalities on occasion in many different facets of their life.
- 7) The holographic and hierarchical operations of the brain's information processing system are interwoven into its structure. While each component of the brain in such a structure can represent the whole brain system, it also processes certain information types in specific ways in response to requests from the integrated core personality.

Lozanov's first book in English, *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedia* was published in the United States in 1978. Most of the research done in the field focused on describing Suggestopedia as a teaching method. Most of them explains Suggestopedia within a theoretical explanation of the effect of suggestion in the "session" (will later be called the "Concert session" as the class is taught with different types of music), and descriptions about its positive effects on memory retention and health promotion as a result of its psychotherapeutic effects. Despite not giving sufficient information about Suggestopedia's teaching practices in actual classrooms, this book became the book to refer to among researchers who were interested in this method, because it was the only official publication containing original information from the inventor of the method. Also, for those teachers who wanted to apply this method, this had been the only authentic reference for the next ten years before Lozanov and Gateva's teacher's manual appeared in 1988. Learning in accordance with the natural function of the brain is one of the keys that Suggestopedia believes to lead to the success. Suggestopedia also considers that the brain is made to handle the complex whole and needs incoming information in the form of a complex whole in order for the information to be processed well. Therefore, Suggestopedia requires the teacher to prepare a course that gives information in the form of a complex whole (Lozanov, 1978, 2006, 2009; Gateva, 1991a).

Since it was developed by Lozanov, the method was implemented and the whole procedure of conducting language classes have been replicated, but not each and every of them has been noteworthy enough.

One of the research studies conducted with 30 first semester students of EESP Mahasaraswati Denpasar as a classroom action research found that the class based on three-cycle (introduction, concert session, elaboration) Suggestopedia class helped first semester students improve their overall speaking abilities. Furthermore, the study showed that students showed positive responses towards the implementation of Suggestopedia in the class.

Another study that aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Suggestopedia on improving language abilities, specifically on speaking abilities, in Indonesia in 2019 came up with similar findings. The alternative hypothesis in this study also proved that students' group taught with Suggestopedia showed better learning outcomes in speaking abilities.

Unlike the other two studies, another research study by Muhammad Ali Mustapha that investigated the use of Suggestopedia in a language class was conducted in Nigeria in 2018 concluded that the implementation of Suggestopedia with aesthetic galleries, musical sounds, and suggestions helping anxiety or tension was beneficial for not only teachers but also for students in a listening class.

In conclusion, as Suggestopedia mainly concerns with social aspect of a learning environment and brain function of learners, it helps learners to overcome anxiety, fear or low self-esteem through social suggestions that remove social barriers in language learning.

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