

Desuggestopedia in Language Learning

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Abstract

Desuggest is the opposite of suggest. This method is used to overcome some learning problems as it puts importance on desuggesting limitations on learning. Desuggestopedia has been called an affective-humanistic approach because there is respect for students' feelings. Students do not use their full powers of learning and they have some limitations in learning. These limitations have to be desuggested using some specific teaching techniques which stimulate them to use their reserved capacity of learning. An affective-humanistic approach is derived from Suggestology. Suggestology is a science concerned with the systematic study of the non-conscious influences that human beings are constantly responding to; involving loading the memory banks with desired ideas and facilitating memories. In this method, the suggestive atmosphere takes place with soft lights, baroque music, cheerful room decorations, comfortable seating and dramatic techniques used by the teacher in the presentation of material.

Keywords: Desuggestion, peripheral learning, classroom set-up, primary activation and creative adaptation.

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Introduction

Suggestopedia is a teaching method which is based on a modern understanding of how the human brain works and how humans learn most effectively. It was developed by a Bulgarian psychotherapist named Georgi Lozanov. The term 'Suggestopedia' is derived from the words, suggestion, and pedagogy which are often utilized to accelerated learning approaches. Lozanov (1991) believed that language learning could occur at a much faster rate than it ordinarily transpires. Suggestopedia was originally applied mainly in foreign language teaching and it was often claimed that students could learn languages approximately three times more quickly through Suggestopedia than conventional methods.

Students learn at a different speeds and rates. One reason for their inefficiency in learning is that they set up psychological barriers to learning. They fear that they will be unable to perform, that they will be limited in their ability to learn, and so they fail. Students do not use the full mental powers that they have. According to psychologists, we may be using five to ten percent of our mental capacity. To have a better use of our reserve capacity, the limitations, barriers and their fear of failures need to be 'desuggested.'

Desuggestopedia is an application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy. Desuggest is the opposite of suggest. It is used to eliminate the negative feeling and Suggestopedia is used to reinforce the positive feeling and to release the full mental power. This methodology has been developed to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful or the negative association they may have toward studying and thus help them overcome the barriers to learning. This theory emphasizes the power of students' feelings and puts the main focus on them. Though Suggestopedia has been primarily been used for foreign language teaching, it can be used to teach any subject. It is known in the western world as 'Super-learning' or 'Suggestive-accelerative learning.' This method has many uses from improving language learning, to

favorable side effects on health, social and psychological relations and the success in other subjects.

Gabriela and Mihaila (2008) state that learners set up psychological barriers to learning and thus learners do not use the full mental power they have. They fear that they will be unable to perform or be limited in their ability to learn so they fear that they will fail. In order to use learners' reserved capacity, the limitations need to be 'desuggested.' Desuggestopedia was developed to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful and the negative association they may have toward studying.

Chastain (1988) discusses teachers' desire to accelerate the process by which students learn to use a foreign language for everyday communication. Increasing thinking capacity is helpful. This is accomplished by desuggesting the psychological barriers that learners bring with them to the learning situation and using techniques to activate the 'paraconscious' part of the mind, just below the fully-conscious mind.

According to Lozanov (1992) the capacity of the human mind is limitless if the right conditions exist. Being in a relaxed state, having high self-esteem, and a comfortable and positive environment are some of those essential conditions for learning.

Lozanov (1992) indicates that there are three major types of Suggestopedia: psychological, didactic and artistic. The psychological focuses on the teacher's ability to maintain the appropriate suggestive atmosphere in the classroom. The teacher needs to be familiar with the numerous variants of unconscious perceptual and thinking processes and use emotional stimulus and peripheral perceptions. The didactic refers to the structural design and integration of courses elements. The material is presented in a global manner in meaningful context. Students are not drilled in fragmented skills. Instead, the material is presented in a holistic manner at the paraconscious level. Artistic uses musical, visual, and dramatic art to

create an atmosphere that is joyful and conducive to student engagement, relaxation, and learning.

Principles of Desuggestopedia

There are five main principles that govern Desuggestopedia:

1. Learning should be characterized by the joy and the absence of tension and it is facilitated in a cheerful environment.
2. Humans operate on a conscious and paraconscious level. A student can learn from what is present in the environment even if his attention is not directed to it.
3. Suggestion is the means to use the normally unused mental reserves for learning.
4. The teacher should recognize that learners bring certain psychological barriers with them to the learning situation, and she should attempt to desuggest them.
5. If students are relaxed and confident, they will not need to try hard to learn the language. It will just come naturally and easily.

There are seven major concepts of Desuggestopedia according to Lozanov and Gatave (1988).

They are as follows:

1. **Mental Reserve Capacities (MRC):** Human beings use 5-10% of brain capacity at the most. In order to make better use of this reserve capacity, the limitations, obstacles and barriers to learning should be desuggested. Desuggestopedia helps students to eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful.
2. **Psychological Set-Up:** The response to every stimulus is very complex, involving many unconscious processes which have become automatic responses. Only when a teacher is able to penetrate the set-up, engaging it in a way which allows it to be accepted and open to extensions and transformation, will the real potential of a student begin to open up.
3. **Suggestion:** There are two basic kinds of suggestion: direct and indirect. Direct suggestions are directed to students' consciousness. In the learning experience, direct suggestions can be made in printed announcements, orally by the teacher, and by text materials (i.e. A teacher tells students that they are going to be successful). Direct suggestion should be used sparingly, for it is most vulnerable to resistance from the setup. Indirect suggestion appeals to the students' subconscious and is actually the more powerful of the two.
4. **Successful classroom atmosphere:** The challenge for a teacher is to create a classroom environment that is bright and cheerful. A positive environment must be created. Classroom atmosphere is focused on three aspects. a) **Psychological:** A nurturing, supportive atmosphere in which the student feels free to try out the new information, be inventive with it, make mistakes without being put down, and, in general, enjoy the

learning experience. b) Educational: The material should be presented in a structured fashion, combining the big picture, analysis and synthesis. Every moment should be a didactic experience even when the learning process is not that apparent. c) Artistic: The classroom should not be cluttered with too many posters and unnecessary objects otherwise the students don't see them. Good quality pictures should be displayed and changed every few days.

5. **Peripheral Learning:** This concept is based on the idea that we perceive much more in our environment than we consciously notice. It is claimed that by putting posters containing grammatical information about the target language on the classroom walls, students will absorb the necessary facts effortlessly. The teacher may or may not call attention to the posters. They are changed from time to time to provide grammatical information that is appropriate to what the students are studying.
6. **Anti-Suggestive Barriers:** These anti-suggestive barriers are a filter between the environmental stimuli and the unconscious mental activity. They are inter-related and mutually reinforcing, and a positive suggestive effect can only be accomplished if these barriers are kept in mind. The overcoming of barriers means compliance with them; otherwise suggestion would be doomed to failure. The suggestive process is always a combination of suggestion and desuggestion and is always at an unconscious or slightly conscious level.
7. **Music:** Music can be a powerful facilitator of holistic full-brain learning and it is a suggestive, relaxing medium. Music is ideal for creating a mentally relaxed state. Lozanov (1992) researched a wide variety of means for presenting material to be learned with background music which would facilitate the mentally relaxed, receptive state of mind that he found to be optimal for learning. Lozanov concluded that music stimulates, invites alertness, and its harmony and order evoke ease and relaxation.

The Teacher's Role

The teacher's main role is to desuggest psychological barriers that learners bring with them to the learning situation. She speaks confidently and gives the students the impression that learning the target language will be easy and enjoyable. Once the students trust the teacher, they can feel more secure. They can be more spontaneous and less inhibited. The students will retain information. The major goal of the teacher is to help students eliminate and overcome the barriers to learning and to help the students to develop communicative ability.

Teachers do not act in a directive way although this method is teacher controlled and not student controlled. Teachers act as a real partner with the students, participating in the activities

such as games and songs naturally and genuinely. The teachers not only need to know the techniques and the methodology completely, but they must also fully understand the theory. If they implement the techniques without understanding, they will not be able to lead their learners to successful results or they could even cause a negative impact on learning.

In order for teachers to be successful with these methods, Lozanov (1992) suggested that several factors must be present:

1. Covering a huge bulk of learning material should not be the priority.
2. Structuring the material in the Suggestopaedic way: global-partial – partial-global, and global in the part – part in the global, related to the golden proportion.
3. As a professional, on one hand, and a personality, on the other hand, the teacher should be a highly-regarded professional, reliable and credible.
4. The teacher should have, not play, a hundred percent expectation of positive results (because the teacher is already experienced even from the time of the teacher training course).
5. The teacher should love his or her students (of course, not sentimentally but as human beings) and teach them with personal participation through games, songs, classical arts, and pleasure.

The teacher uses various activities like dialog, question and answer, repetition and translation. The teacher integrates indirect and direct positive suggestions. To bring a positive expectation of success, he or she should use a varied range of methods like dramatized texts, music, active participation in songs and games, etc.

A great deal of attention is given to students' feelings in this method. The teacher uses various techniques in this method. She makes the classroom environment bright and cheerful. The walls are decorated with scenes related to their communicative language. The classroom contains grammatical information about the target language on classroom walls. The teacher provides as positive environment as possible.

Peripheral learning is another technique used in this method. It is based on the idea that we

perceive much more in our environment than we consciously notice. It is claimed that students will absorb the necessary facts effortlessly by seeing the information in the classroom walls as posters and hangings. The teacher may or may not call attention to the posters. They are changed from time to time to provide grammatical information that is appropriate to what the students are studying at that time.

In the Positive Suggestion technique, the teacher's responsibility is to orchestrate the suggestive factors in a learning situation, thereby helping students break down the barriers to learning that they bring with them. A teacher tells students that they are going to be successful. This type of suggestion is called Direct Suggestion and it directly appeals to the students' consciousness. The Indirect Suggestion appeals to the students' subconscious which is the more powerful of the two.

Choosing a New Identity is a wonderful technique used in this method. The students choose a target language name and occupation. As it continues, the students have an opportunity to develop a whole biography about their fictional selves. Role play can also be used as a technique here. Students are asked to pretend temporarily that they are someone else and to perform in the target language as if they were really that person.

In the technique of First Concert, the teacher introduces a story as related in the dialogue and calls her students' attention to some particular grammatical points. The students have copies of the dialogue in the target language and their native language and refer to it as the teacher is reading. The teacher reads with intoning as selected music is played. Occasionally the students read the text together with the teacher, and listen only to the music as the teacher pauses in particular moments. This is called an Active Concert. In the Passive Concert, the students are asked to put their scripts aside. They simply listen as the teacher reads the dialogue at normal speed. Here also the teacher reads with musical accomplishment and the passive session is,

consequently, occurs more calmly as the students listen only.

In the Primary Activation technique, the students playfully reread the target language dialog out loud, individually or in groups. The teacher divides the students into three groups and each group of students reads the parts of the dialogue in a particular manner, the first group sadly, the second group angrily and the last cheerfully.

In Creative Adaptation technique, students engage in various activities. Activities include singing, dancing, dramatizations and games. This technique is used to accelerate the process of learning a foreign language for every day communication.

In each technique, errors are corrected gently and indirectly. The teacher gives the students the impression that learning is easy and enjoyable. Teachers help the students activate the material to which they have been exposed and integrate indirect positive suggestions into the learning situation.

Disadvantages of Suggestopedia

Apriyana and Islamiyah (2011) stated that Suggestopedia also has limitation since there is no single teaching method that is categorized as the best based on considerations such as curriculum, student motivation, financial limitation, number of students, etc. The main disadvantages of Suggestopedia are:

1. Environment limitation: Most schools in developing countries have large classes. Each class can consist of 70 to 80 students. One of the problems faced in utilizing this method is that it can be difficult to accommodate the number of students in the class.
2. The use of hypnosis: Some people claim that Suggestopedia uses hypnosis which they feel is detrimental. However, Lazanov (1991) strongly denied it.
3. Infantilization of learning: Suggestopedia can have the appearance of treating students in a childish way. There are some students who might reject the approach despite its effectiveness.

Conclusion

Desuggestopedia is a method that aims to mitigate the psychological barriers of the

student. The psychological barriers in language acquisition that manifest with negative feelings include lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, poor fluency, and mispronunciation. To help the students overcome these barriers, the teacher will find different techniques of teaching and learning processes. The teacher should be creative and smart in choosing and using different methods in teaching different skills of language. These methods must be effective for the students to communicate using foreign language. Teachers can use Suggestopedia as a teaching method. It provides some valuable insights into the power of cognition and creates techniques that make students feel comfortable, relaxed and suggestible to the material being learned. The teacher can easily apply this method in class because it is an effective method to make students feel joyful about learning English. During the process of teaching, Desuggestopedia appropriately uses environment suggestion, figure suggestion, activity suggestion and self-suggestion to enhance English teaching. The process is usually accompanied with music or some games or drama to achieve the success of learning.

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