Suggestopedia: A Method for Teaching and Learning in Informal Educational Settings

Novi Indriyani
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Musamus,
Jl. Kamizaun Mopah Lama, Merauke, Indonesia
noviindriyani@unmus.ac.id

Abstract
This paper aims to investigate the implementation of Suggestopedia by a teacher in an English institution, following Lozanov's four main stages of activities: presentation, concert, elaboration, and practice. The data were obtained through observation focusing on teacher activities during the implementation and observed effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method in the language learning session. The positive outcomes of using Suggestopedia in language learning sessions suggest promising prospects for future applications in educational settings. It is essential to recognize the transformative impact it can have on language learning when implemented thoughtfully and inclusively. By addressing the diverse needs and preferences of language learners, and integrating a balanced approach that combines diverse learning modalities, meaningful language applications, and comprehensive language practice and assessment, educators can maximize the effectiveness of this approach.

Keywords: Teaching Method, Suggestopedia, Informal Education

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the importance of English has increased significantly as people seek to meet requirements for school, employment, living abroad, and various other purposes. This surge in demand has made learning English more popular than ever. People are enrolling in informal institutions to take English courses because the competition among these programs has intensified (Alfarhan, 2017). These courses offer specific programs tailored to the needs of their customers, providing them with a comfortable selection process (Manan et al., 2016).

English courses differ from those offered at formal institutions where English is simply one subject among many. In Indonesia, it is mandatory for students to pass requirements related to English proficiency defined by the government's curriculum for both schools and tertiary education. Unlike formal institutions which have fixed schedules and programs, English courses offer flexibility based on
learners’ individual needs regarding timing and content (Bourke et al., 2018). As a result of this flexibility, individuals often opt for additional or supplementary course offerings that address any gaps left by standard educational curricula implementation.

Most English classes aim to establish a pleasant learning environment that can engage and support their students (Mag et al., 2017). In these classes, instructors are expected to possess a thorough grasp of effective teaching methods, especially for language instruction. Educators can make use of a variety of instructional tools to elucidate language meaning and structure, involve students in a topic, or serve as the basis for an entire activity (Jackie, 2022). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) key strategies consist of establishing a welcoming atmosphere, integrating music, enabling peripheral learning, embracing mistakes, reducing homework burden, and fostering integrated learning. Consequently, English courses are careful in selecting educators who can facilitate enjoyable classroom experiences for their students.

This situation aligns with George Lazanov's Suggestopedia theory from the 1970s. The approach relied on the power of suggestion in learning: using positive indications to make learners more receptive and, as a result, stimulate learning. Bancroft (1976) believed that a relaxed but focused state is optimal for learning. To achieve this relaxed state and promote positive suggestions, suggestopedia incorporates music, a comfortable and relaxing environment, and fosters a teacher-student relationship akin to the parent-child dynamic (Wang, 2023).

Lozanov (2005), outlined four key stages of activities in the suggestopedia approach: introduction, active musical session, passive musical session, reinforcement, and application. In the introduction phase, students are guided to adopt a positive attitude towards learning as something easy and enjoyable. The instructor aims to establish a relaxed and cheerful classroom atmosphere at this stage through various interactive exercises. During the active musical session, which involves reading aloud followed by echoing from students, the focus is on developing language skills while creating an engaging environment. This is followed by the passive session where soft baroque music plays in the background while the teacher re-reads the text for attentive listening by students with added relaxation techniques such as visualization or breathing exercises. Reinforcement involves informing students about engaging activities such as film-making or gaming after these sessions to further reinforce their learning experience. Lastly during application potential education games could be used helping teachers utilize games and puzzles more effectively to assess student comprehension.

This paper aims to investigate the implementation of Suggestopedia by a teacher in an English institution, following Lozanov's four main stages of activities: presentation, concert, elaboration, and practice. The study will reveal the connection between theory and reality through classroom observations. Additionally, it will provide findings and discussions to elaborate on the activities and potential issues in classrooms. It will also explore the impact of these activities on student learning outcomes.
METHOD

Interactions in an informal educational setting were observed in a classroom. The observations required careful analysis, and data was collected from a program called Conversational Program 1. This program involved three participants - 6th semester students taking additional English courses to meet international credit requirements. It was initiated based on both institutional offerings and student requests. During the observation process, the researcher used various tools such as video recordings and photographs while being mindful not to disrupt the learners' concentration. In addition, interviews were conducted with teachers, and detailed notes based on these discussions were made by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The observation proceeded smoothly and effectively demonstrated the interactions. The focus was on WH Questions, with the teacher first explaining how to ask questions in different scenarios. She then guided the students through practicing by asking questions based on provided pictures and real-life situations. Additionally, she demonstrated how to create descriptive texts using lists of WH Questions and encouraged students to develop their own texts for group discussions, providing examples for better understanding before concluding the lesson at this productive meeting session.

The results and discussions are elaborated in following points; The data were obtained through observation focusing on teacher activities during the implementation of Suggestopedia method in teaching and learning process. According to Lozanov (1978), there are four main stages of activities in Suggestopedia method:

1. Presentation stages

   At the beginning of the session, the teacher created a positive and relaxed atmosphere by welcoming the students with a warm smile and engaging in light conversation. She then proceeded to introduce the topic of WH questions using visual aids and examples to make the concept clear and understandable. The students seemed engaged and attentive as the teacher employed a variety of activities to present the material, such as role-playing, interactive discussions, and group work. This variety kept the students interested and involved throughout the presentation stage. These strategies effectively reduce tension within the class setting while promoting active participation from all students.

2. Concert Session

   Following the engaging presentation stage, the teacher seamlessly transitioned into the concert session of the Suggestopedia method. The classroom environment was transformed as soft, soothing music played in the background, creating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. During this phase, the teacher led the students in reading aloud and echoing, incorporating language skills development with an emphasis on creating an interactive and enjoyable experience. The use of music and the integration of language activities helped in fostering a positive and receptive learning
environment, aligning with the principles of suggestopedia.

The students actively participated in the musical session, responding to the teacher's prompts with enthusiasm and gaining confidence in their language abilities. The incorporation of music not only enhanced the language learning process but also contributed to the overall positive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom.

The effectiveness of the concert session was evident in the students' increased participation and eagerness to engage with the language learning activities. The combination of music, language practice, and interactive elements created a dynamic and enjoyable environment conducive to effective learning.

3. Elaboration stage

In the elaboration stage of the Suggestopedia method, the teacher employed a range of techniques to reinforce the learning concepts introduced in the presentation and concert stages. She seamlessly integrated the use of baroque music, creating a serene ambiance while reading the text aloud to the students. This passive musical session was accompanied by relaxation techniques, such as guided visualization and breathing exercises, to enhance the receptive state of the learners.

The students exhibited focused and attentive listening during the elaboration stage, indicating their receptiveness to the material being presented. The incorporation of relaxation techniques and soft music contributed to a calming and soothing atmosphere, facilitating a heightened state of receptiveness and retention among the students.

The application of reinforcement exercises was also notable during this stage, as the teacher effectively communicated engaging activities such as film-making and gaming to further reinforce the language learning experience. The seamless integration of these activities served to solidify the language concepts introduced, providing a practical application that enhanced the overall learning process.

The utilization of these activities in the elaboration stage not only reinforced the language learning concepts but also contributed to the establishment of a positive and enjoyable learning environment, aligning with the core principles of the Suggestopedia method.

4. Practice stage

The practice stage of the Suggestopedia method was characterized by the implementation of interactive educational games and puzzles to assess student comprehension and reinforce language skills. The teacher adeptly integrated engaging activities that encouraged active participation and collaboration among the students.

Through the use of educational games, the students demonstrated their comprehension of language concepts in a dynamic and interactive manner, fostering a sense of enjoyment and achievement in their learning experience. The use of puzzles and interactive tasks served as effective tools for assessing student understanding and retention, creating a supportive environment for language practice and application.
The practice stage not only facilitated the consolidation of language skills but also provided a platform for students to actively engage with the material in an enjoyable and interactive manner, further enhancing the effectiveness of the Suggestopedia approach.

**Discussion**

The effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method in the observed session reflects the alignment of its principles with cognitive and psychological factors influencing learning. The incorporation of music in the concert stage not only created a relaxed and receptive environment for language practice but also stimulated the affective domain, as proposed by the Suggestopedia approach Richards and Rodgers (2001). The use of soft, soothing music contributed to reducing anxiety and enhancing students' motivation, thus facilitating a positive and engaging atmosphere for language learning.

Moreover, the integration of relaxation techniques, such as guided visualization and breathing exercises, during the elaboration stage facilitated a heightened state of receptiveness among the students. This aligns with the Suggestopedia concept of utilizing the power of suggestion to enhance learning receptivity and retention. The combination of passive musical sessions and relaxation techniques contributed to the creation of a psychologically comfortable learning environment, which is integral to the Suggestopedia method (Tajariana et al., 2022).

The aforementioned observations highlight the significance of integrating Suggestopedia principles in language learning curricula to align with the cognitive and affective aspects of learning. By leveraging a holistic approach that considers both psychological and cognitive factors, educators and institutions can optimize the teaching and learning experience for language learners. This not only promotes an interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere but also effectively enhances language skills acquisition and retention, as reflected in the observed session.

The multifaceted implementation of the Suggestopedia method provides valuable insights into the potential of this approach to address the diverse needs of language learners. The structured application of Suggestopedia, encompassing various stages such as the concert, elaboration, and practice stages, effectively caters to different learning styles and preferences (Kharismawati, 2014). This comprehensive approach ensures that students engage with the material through varied modalities, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience.

Based on the successful implementation and observed effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method in the language learning session, it is evident that this approach holds significant promise for future applications in educational settings. The seamless integration of music, relaxation techniques, and interactive activities showcased the potential to create a conducive and engaging environment for language learners. Building on this foundation, it is recommended that educators consider the following for future applications and adaptations of the Suggestopedia method.

While the observed session appeared effective in engaging students and creating a positive learning environment, it is important to consider alternative perspectives on the Suggestopedia method. Critics argue that the use of music, relaxation techniques, and interactive activities in the language
learning process may not necessarily lead to substantial cognitive and linguistic advancement. They emphasize that the focus on creating a relaxed environment through music and relaxation techniques could potentially detract from a rigorous and focused language learning experience.

Furthermore, opponents of the Suggestopedia approach argue that overreliance on passive musical sessions and relaxation techniques may not be universally effective for all learners. There is a concern that such methods might cater more to certain learning preferences, potentially leaving out students who do not respond as favorably to music and relaxation techniques (Wang, 2023). This raises questions about the inclusivity and adaptability of the Suggestopedia method for diverse groups of language learners.

Another point of contention is the integration of activities like film-making and gaming in the elaboration stage. Critics argue that while these activities may momentarily engage students, they might not necessarily contribute significantly to the retention and application of language concepts (Suyadi, 2021). Instead, there is a concern that these activities could distract from the core learning objectives, potentially leading to a lack of depth in language comprehension and application.

Moreover, the practice stage, which involves educational games and puzzles, may be seen as an oversimplification of language learning. Critics argue that while interactive tasks can be engaging, they may not fully challenge students to develop a deep understanding of language concepts and their practical application (Deny et al., 2016). This raises concerns about the depth and rigor of language practice and assessment within the Suggestopedia framework.

In light of these opposing perspectives, it is important for educators to critically evaluate the Suggestopedia method and consider a balanced approach that addresses the diverse learning needs and preferences of language learners. This may involve integrating a variety of instructional strategies and assessment methods to ensure a comprehensive and effective language learning experience for all students.

**Recommendations and Future Applications**

While there are varying perspectives on the implementation of Suggestopedia in education, empirical evidence demonstrates its efficacy. The positive outcomes of using Suggestopedia in language learning sessions suggest promising prospects for its integration into educational contexts. Additionally, the seamless incorporation of music, relaxation methods, and interactive tasks has shown potential to establish a stimulating environment for language learners. It is essential that educators explore utilizing and modifying the Suggestopedia approach in future endeavors and research.

In response to criticism about the adaptability of the Suggestopedia method, it is important for educators to incorporate a range of learning modalities. This may include integrating different musical styles to accommodate various preferences and incorporating relaxation techniques along with other mindfulness practices that appeal to a broader range of students. Embracing diverse approaches can help educators ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all learners within the framework of Suggestopedia.
Educators can improve the incorporation of activities like film-making and gaming by highlighting their link to real-world language usage in response to concerns about their depth and practical significance. For example, film-making projects could prioritize the development of language learning materials or short films that showcase genuine language use in daily scenarios. Similarly, gaming activities can be structured to replicate real-life language obstacles and interactions, thereby strengthening the application of practical language skills.

To address the concerns about the rigor of language practice and assessment within the Suggestopedia framework, educators can implement a balanced approach that combines interactive tasks with more traditional language exercises. This could involve incorporating comprehensive language assessments that evaluate students' language proficiency across various skill domains, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. By balancing interactive elements with rigorous language practice, educators can ensure a more holistic evaluation of students' language abilities within the Suggestopedia approach.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, while acknowledging the potential criticisms and opposing perspectives surrounding the Suggestopedia method, it is essential to recognize the transformative impact it can have on language learning when implemented thoughtfully and inclusively. By addressing the diverse needs and preferences of language learners, and integrating a balanced approach that combines diverse learning modalities, meaningful language applications, and comprehensive language practice and assessment, educators can maximize the effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method. Ultimately, this multifaceted approach emphasizes the value of creating dynamic and enjoyable learning environments while ensuring the depth and practicality of language skills acquisition and retention.

**REFERENCES**


Manan, S A., David, M K., & Dumanig, F P. (2016, January 1). English Language Teaching in Pakistan: Language Policies, Delusions and Solutions. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22464-0_10


Wang, S. (2023, January 1). Suggestopedia and Its Application in Different Types of Learners. https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1110863