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Suggestopaedia**

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Rethinking the Concept of Suggestion within Suggestopaedia

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the concept of suggestion within the tool known as Suggestopaedia. Developed by the Bulgarian scientist Georgi Lozanov as a method of teaching and learning, Suggestopaedia draws attention to the role and significance of suggestion in the process of education. The term Suggestopaedia is composed of two words, suggesto, which is related to the Latin verb suggero, suggessi, suggestum, or suggest, and paedia, which is connected with matters of teaching, learning and education, that is, pedagogy. The term suggestion has been defined in different ways by different scholars according to their particular interpretation and point of view. On one hand, the word is sometimes used in different languages with more or less negative connotations. For instance, it has been associated with hypnosis by some researchers. Yet, Lozanov's understanding of suggestion in Suggestopaedia, which is influenced by his long term research in this field, is entirely different from other definitions of the term. In Suggestopaedia, suggestion comes to mean "to offer, to propose" a meaning away from negative associations. Thus, it is the student's free will to choose. From his point of view, suggestion is a communicative event that shows its influence in every sphere of life. Since classrooms are rich communicative contexts, in Suggestopaedia, suggestion is presented in an organized and deliberate fashion in order to tap enormous potential capacities for accelerated harmonious development. To sum up, in this study the term suggestion will be investigated in terms of Suggestopaedia and how Lozanov came to his own definition of suggestion, the suggestion with a capital "S" and finally how this understanding of Suggestion has paved the way for a new philosophy of education.

Keywords: Suggestion, Suggestopaedia, Education, Philosophy of Education

Introduction

The concept of Suggestion, which is one of the underlying concepts in Suggestopaedia, has been defined in different ways by different researchers according to their perspectives. In order to understand the origins of Suggestopaedia, it is important to understand what Suggestion means in Suggestopaedia and how it is different from the usual meaning of the term, and how Lozanov came up with his definition of "Suggestion". Sonia Dougal (2001), who refers to suggestopaedic suggestion as the "Suggestion with a capital S," emphasizes that Lozanov's Suggestion "basically stands for liberation from conditioning, followed by the activation of some of the human personality's reputed millions of unused, because as yet untapped, brain cells" (p.247).

Originally, the word suggestion comes from the Latin word that is, "to place, to prompt, to hint". Mostly the term is used in different languages with negative connotations. In English, however, it means "to offer, to propose", a meaning having nothing to do with negative associations. Suggestopaedia makes use of this meaning of the word; therefore, it is the student's free will to accept or to reject it. "This refers, not only to what, but to how to propose, so that, for the person, the suggestion will be a most acceptable and natural thing and the anticipated phenomenon will occur" (Lozanov, 2009, p.29).

Alternatively, the term suggestion has often been associated with hypnosis by some researchers. This is probably based on the fact that for the first time suggestive phenomena has been observed in hypnosis. However, Lozanov's understanding of Suggestion, which is a result of his long-term research, is completely different from the other definitions of the term. In his point of view, Suggestion is a positive communicative factor; it is similar to the suggestions of an affectionate parent, or of a good friend in a sincere communication. According to Lozanov, Suggestion has its effects in all facets of life in which communication exists. It is a universal factor that exists in every moment of our lives, though not always in an organized manner. To explain this point, Lozanov states:

Everything around us is suggestive. The nature, the sea, the mountain, the singing bird, going to the concert, the theater, the exhibition provoke in us feelings. The dirty, crowded city provokes another feeling. Everything around us is suggestive, not only around us, but in us also (personal communication with Lozanov, September 1, 2008).

Moreover, suggestopaedic suggestion is not related to clinical suggestion with hypnosis or without hypnosis in which creative thinking is never possible. In clinical suggestion, the person is a passive recipient of suggestions. Although one can reach quick results with a clinical type of suggestion, it has many negative side-effects for the person who experiences it. Lozanov's investigations into clinical suggestion have revealed that this type of suggestion has a more or less conditioning, subordinating effect and restricts personal

freedom. On the other hand, through Lozanov's spontaneously absorbed, non-manipulative Suggestion, free thinking is present all the time. Therefore, it is important to note that in Suggestopaedia there is no commanding, dictation and manipulation. Also, guided relaxation, imagery, breathing or other techniques leading to hypnotising monotony are completely avoided. Instead, a vibrating process of teaching and learning is preferred through the change of tempo as an indispensable principle. Although Lozanov's understanding of Suggestion was far from its use in clinical contexts, he had to use the term "Suggestion" as one of the important concepts in his methodology due to the scarcity of the terminology in this field. In order to illuminate his understanding of the term, and how he reached this definition of the term, it will be necessary to examine some turning points in his long-term research.

Lozanov's Research into Suggestion

Lozanov's specialization in psychiatry, neurology, brain physiology, pedagogy, psychology and psychotherapy comprises the scientific ground of his research in suggestion and its application to the educational process, that is, Suggestopaedia. As a scientist and a believer of man's capacities, Lozanov looked into all possibilities as a means to enhance the potential for memory and the potential of man through his/her harmonious and free development. One important possibility seemed the use of soft Suggestions in the educational process. To that end, he started some experiments which soon became a very popular trend all over the world. With regard to the inception of Suggestopaedia, Lozanov (1978) states the following:

Suggestopedy started purely as a psychological experiment aimed at increasing memory capacities in the educational process. This experiment, however, opened the way for a new trend in pedagogical practice. Suggestopedy gradually developed into a method for experimental study of suggestion itself, to determine its basic components, specific features, and laws (p.5).

Evidence for the rich capacity of man came from an unusual phenomenon that he observed in his psychotherapeutic practice: hypermnesia, that is, absolutely strong memory of the past linked with particular mental illnesses. In order to explore the nature of hypermnesia, he carried out some experiments. As a result of his research, he found that hypnosis did not always lead to hypermnesia, yet in some cases hypnosis could even weaken the memory capacities and damage the personality. "Hypnosis is mainly suppressing and changing the will, once people are hypnotized, they lose their will, and they become mechanical people" (personal communication with Lozanov, September 1, 2008).

The case which he observed in one of his patients in 1955 during his clinical work opened a critical door into the unused, hidden reserves of the

mind which soon paved the way for an understanding that “there is a safe, non-hypnotic way to enormous potential capacities for accelerated harmonious development, capacities that are locked within us” (Lozanov, 2009, p.32). His patient was an arc welder who had to learn a Russian poem by heart for his next class. In spite of the fact that the man only heard the poem once in the class, he could recall the whole poem without a mistake after his therapy with Lozanov. Initially, Lozanov thought that the result might have stemmed from “involuntarily suggestions”, but his many years of research pointed out that it was the consequence of “a quite normal, spontaneous, desuggestive, communication” (Lozanov, 2009, p.32). Based on the result of his studies, he stopped working in the area of hypnosis and focused on studying “a spontaneously absorbed, non-traumatic, non-manipulative, non-commanding, non-programming, communicative, soft, tender, Suggestion”. He concluded that through the use of such Suggestions the potential for memorization increased, and this type of Suggestion can be safely used in educational practice without any negative side effects. In order to corroborate his assumption, he continued to carry out a number of experiments based on a “communicative, soft, tender Suggestion without hypnosis” rather than a “dictating, dominating one”. His experiments to improve the capacity of memory by Suggestion in a waking state revealed that “Suggestion, non-manipulative communicative Suggestion, in a normal state of vigilance, is in itself sufficient to improve memory, and neither sleep nor hypnosis is needed” (Lozanov, 2009, p.25).

Other evidence regarding man’s rich capacity emerged from Lozanov’s investigations and experiments on yogis - people with unusual capabilities - who had personally learned to tap into the reserves of their minds. This research into extraordinary abilities of man as well as his practice in the area of hypnosis influenced his understanding of Suggestion. From these experiments, a number of laws emerged. One significant law was: “Nothing is lost of past-life experience.” As a result of his investigations both in clinical and educational settings, Lozanov (2009) concluded that “the potential abilities of the personality, the brain and the mind reserves could be accessed in every individual, provided the appropriate methods were used” (p.26). In this process, the role played by a highly reliable teacher who knows the means of Suggestion is of the utmost significance. With teachers who are aware of this type of suggestive communication, schooling practice easily turns into a pleasant, stimulating experience where an individual’s personal expression and freedom are respected.

Non-specific Communicative Means (Means of Suggestion)

Lozanov classifies the means of Suggestion into two groups: the first group involves the dual plane, intonation, and rhythm of speech (which are also elements of the dual plane). The latter group includes: credibility (the prestige, reliability of the source of information), infantilization, and pseudo-passivity.

The dual planeness signifies that we receive numerous stimuli from the environment on two levels, that is, consciously or unconsciously. According to

Lozanov, conscious stimuli refer to the first plane of communication. The second plane of communication, on the other hand, refers to the peripheral perceptions, or weak signals such as intonation, gestures, facial expression and stance. In Suggestopaedia, second plane communication is essential in order to “build up authority on first sight, to win over students, or to inspire confidence”. Therefore, a teacher’s knowledge of double plane communication is rather important; otherwise, Suggestion results in failure. “Teachers exert an influence on the students not only with what they say, but also with the intonation of their voices, their smiles, gestures, clothes, movements and their whole attitude toward the pupils” (Lozanov, 1978, p.2). In order for Suggestion to be effective, what is said and how it is said should not be contradictory because “only when there is sincerity can double planeness be mastered” (Lozanov, 1978, p.194).

Intonation, as one of the components of double-plane communication, is considered to promote the suggestive process. A suggestopaedic teacher does not use “artificial, ordinary intonation”, but “an artistic one”. It is crucial because “when a Suggestion is put forward, the intonation in the voice makes whatever it is sound significant. At the same time, it convinces us of the authoritativeness of the source of information. Intonation also helps achieve double planeness in behavior” (Lozanov, 1978, p.195). In order to get insight into the effect of intonation on students, a number of experiments were carried out using types of intonation. According to the results of the experiments, it was concluded that artificial intonation had to be discarded, and artistic intonation, which was more acceptable to students, had to be retained.

Rhythm is another suggestive factor in double planeness. According to Lozanov (1978), rhythm is in every aspect of life:

Rhythm is a basic biological principle, a reflection of the rhythms in nature. There are daily rhythms, seasonal rhythms, and annual rhythms, affective vegetative reactions, and, hence, mental life. There are also many cosmic rhythms affecting personality...Rhythm finds empiric application in various spheres of life. Suggestive effects in medicine, commercial advertisement, pedagogical practice, and other spheres are most often presented rhythmically (p.196).

Along with intonation, rhythm maximizes its effect when the material to be learned is introduced in a rhythmical manner.

Intonation and rhythm, combined with credibility, create a strong suggestive effect and accelerate learning. In Suggestopaedia, authority refers to credibility, prestige and reliability of the source of information, that is, the teacher. It is thought that the presence of a highly reliable and prestigious teacher can lead to an atmosphere of confidence. For this reason, the role of a prestigious teacher is of great importance in the suggestive process. According to Lozanov, there are various types of prestige: of personality, of sound logic, of the beauty found in great works of art.

In Lozanov's point of view, the concept of infantilization refers to a state of mind we experience during our childhood. It implies replacement of the existing setup of an adult by a new one similar to a child's setup – a setup of confidence, a feeling of peace and security. It is a well-known fact that children learn faster than adults. In the course of time, as we develop reasoning skills, our memory starts to weaken. On the other hand, because of the negative effects of the environment, a conviction about our limited capacity develops. In a Suggestopaedia class, the presence of a prestigious teacher is the most important factor that leads to confidence in students. This, in turn, results in a state in which students' perception, memorization, and creativity level increases. This is how infantilization occurs in the system. There are several ways for developing a state of infantilization in the process, such as games, songs, and giving students new identities. Infantilization helps overcome anti-suggestive barriers, as well.

The concept of pseudo-passivity implies "concentrative self-relaxation" and "internal superactivity accompanied by the economizing of energy". This is similar to children's stress-free learning state. Lozanov (1978) describes this state as follows:

Pseudopassiveness requires the setup of a serene, confident attitude toward the suggestive program being presented, and to be in the same state of mind as one would be in attending a concert. The listeners are behaviorally passive and make no intellectual efforts to memorize or understand, they allow themselves to apprehend the program of music emotionally. The physical and intellectual behavioral passiveness is not real passiveness because, at the same time, as the music is apprehended, complicated internal processes take place, moods originate, associations emerge in the mind and ideas occur to one. All this is not tiring in the physically and intellectually passive climate. On the basis of such passive pseudopassiveness (concert state) with a built up setup for hypermnesia, the antisuggestive barriers are much more easily overcome and the reserve capacities of the mind are released (p.198).

Anti-Suggestive Barriers and Social Suggestive Norms

We constantly receive information outside of our conscious awareness. In order to protect our personality against negative stimuli, we have a unique system called anti-suggestive barriers. Lozanov identifies three anti-suggestive barriers: the logical/critical barriers, the intuitive/emotional barriers, and the ethical/moral barriers. The barriers work on us both in negative and positive ways. When we do not receive the harmful stimuli through the barriers, it means that they have operated on us positively. On the contrary, if the barriers prevent us from accepting useful stimuli, it can be considered that they have functioned negatively. In order to activate our potentialities, it is essential to receive as many positive stimuli as possible by harmonizing with the anti-suggestive barriers.

In Lozanov's point of view, since the social suggestive norms set limitations to our potential, this notion has a negative meaning. When the anti-suggestive barriers accept the negative suggestions from the society, our development ceases. The science of Suggestology shows us how to overcome the established social suggestive norms in order to activate our potential, and helps free ourselves from the negative suggestions through the process of desuggestion.

Suggestology

Suggestology, founded by Lozanov himself, is the science of Suggestion. In this science, man is seen as a product of the environment that imposes limitations on people usually at an unconscious level. Suggestology, which deals with Lozanov's concept of Suggestion, aims to liberate personality from the former negative conditioning. Therefore, the most significant aim of Suggestology is to identify stimuli, how and when they affect us. "Only then, if society ever does find the strength and power to define them, will the development of the personality be organized on constructive, scientific bases" (Lozanov, 1978, p.53).

On the other hand, it is significant to note that Dr. Lozanov did not invent the term suggestion; yet, his long term of scientific research in this area enabled him to formulate a theory of Suggestion for its application in various fields, particularly in pedagogy. This, in turn, led to the inception of Suggestopaedia, as an experimental method for Suggestology. Since his work in Suggestion is grounded on scientific observation, it will always be possible to confirm its validity as a theory whenever his understanding of Suggestion is at work.

Aims of Suggestology

The science of Suggestology has been developed for the following aims:

1. To demonstrate that human personality possesses potential capabilities far exceeding those recognized by generally accepted social norms;
1. 2.To analyze the extent to which various documented individual achievements, demonstrating the use of potential reserves can be expected from all or most members of society;
2. To promote interest in the search for methods capable of releasing the unused potential reserves of the brain/mind

Principles of Suggestology

Lozanov cites three principles of Suggestology:

1. Interpersonal communication is always global and simultaneously conscious and unconscious.

2. All stimuli are associated, coded, symbolized and generalized.

By associated Lozanov means that all stimuli exist in a context. Nothing is isolated... Coded means that the stimuli are condensed for easier storage in memory... By symbolized Lozanov means that a stimulus is a symbol for the whole picture. The stimulus will trigger off a world in the mind of the perceiver, and this world will be different for each individual... The symbolic is the highest level. That level is the philosophy of the world (Tarr, 1995, p.22).

3. All stimuli are complex. To explain this principle, Tarr (1995) states that:

We accept all stimuli as complex in our brains, complex because no one knows what a given individual's response will be to a given stimulus. This notion is very different from the thinking of the behaviorists who believe in stimulus-response: there is one possible response for each stimulus. In Lozanov's view a given stimulus will elicit one response in one student and very possibly a completely different response in another student (p.22).

Inception of Suggestopaedia

Suggestopaedia is the application of Suggestology in the process of education. Lozanov (2009) states that "Suggestopaedia originated in the context of our medical-psycho-therapeutic practice, where we first witnessed manifestation of hypermnesia" (p.17). Based on his research on suggestion in the clinical setting, he transferred his experience to the educational context and drew attention to the role of his understanding of Suggestion in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, he formulated concepts, laws, aims, principles, and means for Suggestopaedia. Because of the lack of a stable meaning of the word suggestion discussed above, the name of the method brought about some misunderstandings.

Basically, Suggestopaedia refers to the removal of negative, limiting barriers to learning through a change of mind. With this new change of mind or setup, students adopt a new understanding of their capacity and they are supposed to take risks to challenge imposed limitations on them. This is referred to as the process of desuggestion-suggestion. Although Suggestopaedia is generally known in the language teaching profession, it can be used in every discipline and in every aspect of life. With regard to this Lozanov explains:

Suggestopaedia is not a linguistic method only, but a method for everything, the method for another kind of communication - the soft communication elaborated on the basis of my integral psychotherapy (personal communication with Lozanov, September 1, 2008).

While Lozanov's integral psychotherapy model involves various forms of communicative methods, it excludes the methods of Jung and Freud, as well as commanding clinical suggestion and hypnosis.

Conclusion

All in all, Lozanov's definition of Suggestion is definitely incompatible with all definitions of the term that view suggestion as a kind of manipulation. In his understanding, it is a positive, communicative factor; therefore, Suggestion as a communicative factor can affect the state of mind in a positive way. This type of Suggestion has been guaranteed through the two laws of Suggestopaedia, that is, love and freedom. The personality of the teacher, their unconditional love for students, the change of tempo and students' freedom of choice in the process are significant elements that will get in the way of a tendency for manipulative suggestion. This concept of Suggestion is based on free, spontaneous absorption of information through peripheral perceptions which results in the tapping of the reserves. Besides, classical art and aesthetics used in the methodology set groundwork for non-manipulative communicative suggestions due to their potential to give an infinite number of weak signals. Suggestopaedic art also creates conditions for psycho-relaxation and harmonious states which, in turn, lead to a spontaneously acquisition state and improve the capacity to activate the reserves of the mind.

The application of Lozanov's concept of Suggestion in pedagogy seems to offer promising results for the education of our future. As Lozanov states, this is a new culture and a new philosophy of life where we can learn five to ten times faster, as well as more easily and joyfully. It is a kind of liberation, de-programming, de-suggesting from the social suggestive norms that our capacities are restricted. In order to enhance the schooling practice, this concept of Suggestion seems to be the best possible way to restore our damaged integrity due to its emphasis on real humanization of education.

Last but not least, Lozanov's conviction that every individual has enormous capacities within that can be tapped through appropriate methods has already opened the door to more effective schooling practices, as well as a philosophy of education in which love of human beings and freedom of personality are of the utmost importance.

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