

SUGGESTOPEDY

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Suggestopedy is the science of using suggestology in the classroom. Dr. Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psycho-therapist, has done extensive work with this for the past 25 years. As a young person he was interested in hypnosis. His father told him that it was really not a possibility for him to hypnotize people unless he became a psychiatrist. He followed his father's advice.

As he began to work more and more with hypnosis he became convinced that hypnosis worked because of the suggestions which one gave to the person under hypnosis. With further experimentation he concluded that most hypnotic phenomena could be brought about without hypnosis.¹ An early proof which he made of the power of suggestion was that he used this alone as the anesthetic for a person who was to undergo an operation.

Mr. K., a teacher aged 50, was operated on in 1965 for a hernia inguinalis indirecta dextra which was about the size of a child's head. During the course of the 50 minute operation Dr. Lozanov administered suggestion in a waking state to the patient. The patient felt pain for only two minutes, in places where pain appears under an ordinary anesthetic and in places which were not the object of preliminary suggestive anesthetic. During the other 48 minutes the patient talked with all who were attending the operation. The patient had no excessive bleeding and healed very quickly.²

He also became interested in how certain people could learn to memorize enormous amounts of material. In India he studied the people who had been taught the Vedas by heart. He learned that they were chosen as young people at random, but that after having been chosen they were told that they were special, and they could learn large amounts of material by heart.

1. Lozanov, Georgi, "The Lozanov Report", 1978 Lozanov Learning Institute Inc. p. 8.

2. Lozanov, Georgi, SUGGESTOLOGY AND OUTLINES OF SUGGESTOPEDY, 1978

One day he walked into a language class at the institute where he worked. It was a class whose goal was to give the patients something interesting to do. After the class he asked the teacher if he could teach the class the following day and he said that he was certain he could teach a great many more words. She granted him permission to teach. Although he probably did not tell the teacher, he had found the class quite boring. The following day he did teach and taught much more than had ever before been taught in one day in that language classroom. That was the beginning of his research into the use of suggestology in the classroom.

A classroom which is using suggestopedy is characterized by joy and an absence of tension. There is a union of the conscious and paraconscious within each student. ³ (Lozanov uses the word paraconscious to mean mental activity which is more or less unconscious; everything that is outside the scope of consciousness.) ⁴ The third principle which is found is the "suggestive link on the level of the reserve complex". ⁵ The reserve complex permits "a new type of assimilation of material, a considerably larger scope and durability of what has been assimilated, higher creativity, a positive psycho-hygienic and psychotherapeutic effect, and useful educational influence". ⁶

There is a unity of the three groups of suggestive means, the psychological, didactic, and artistic means. ⁷ The person in a suggestopedic classroom is treated with love, and this is the feeling which the students have for the teacher. On beginning a language class the teacher enters after the students are already seated in the classroom. She goes around the class shaking each person's hand and saying hello. Continually throughout the class the student knows by the teacher's manner and facial expressions that he is loved. The student feels very secure in the classroom, because the teacher acts as the authority, letting the student know by this that he will be able to learn, because he is in the hands of an expert who loves him. Didactically each unit of work is very large. This suggests to the student that he can learn great amounts of material. Both the global and the particular are taught at the same time.

3. Lozanov, "The Lozanov Report". p. 31

4. Ibid. p. 13

5. Lozanov, SUGGESTOLOGY AND OUTLINES OF SUGGESTOPEDY. p. 258

6. Ibid. p. 260

7. Ibid. p. 261

Music, drama and art are an integral part of any suggestopedic class. Much material is assimilated by the students with no more effort than their watching a play which contains the didactic material, as well as emotional and artistic facets. In language classes the material is assimilated by listening to a special concert and by singing didactic songs, such as "J'ai une rose, une rose jaune. Tu as une rose, une rose blanche, etc." (Words by Z. Ivanova and E. Jordanova. Music by E. Gateva.)⁸

In order that the suggestion that people can learn large amounts of material in a short time can work, one must free the paraconscious. It is necessary to desuggest that people can learn certain proscribed amounts of material at one sitting, which goes against cultural barriers. One also crosses the critical-logical thinking, intuitive-affective, and ethical barriers by making all of the material taught in harmony with them. Some of the means used to cross those barriers are infantilization, pseudopassivity, authority (prestige), and doubleplaneness.

The students in the class learn as if they were very young children. This state can be suggested by someone else or by the person himself. Pseudopassivity is the state one finds oneself in at a concert of classical music, a time when the person is in an Alpha state⁹, in which the body is slowed down and relaxed to a point where it easily permits material to enter long-term memory in the brain. This state is induced in language classes with selections of classical music. By chance Lozanov discovered that the mind does not forget anything which it has learned previously. A patient was worried, because he needed to recite a poem in a class the following day and did not have time to learn it. The doctor asked if he had heard or read the poem. The patient answered yes, the teacher had read it. Dr. Lozanov told the patient that he would remember the poem the following day when he needed to recite it. As suggested the patient did remember the poem, but the unexpected happening was that the student remembered a teacher from several years before reciting the poem.

8. Lozanov, Georgi, LE FRANCAIS, Manuel de Langue Francaise, 1981, Lozanov Learning Institute. p.20

9. Lozanov, "The Lozanov Report" p.16

* A state of the brain between waking and sleeping.

And so the mind takes in a great volume of material, whether it is a long dialog in a foreign language or it is a dialog concerning physics. The material has emotional value, a necessity because the human being functions as a whole. Teaching only to the intellect cannot be nearly as effective. Doubleplaneness means that every facet of the classroom and the teacher exhibit the suggestion that the student can learn very well and quickly. The positiveness of the teacher, love of teaching, surety that the students will learn, continual feedback on how fast they are learning, the room's positive decorations, which are integral parts of the lesson: all will be picked up paraconsciously or consciously depending on the momentary point of view of the student. All contribute to the doubleplaneness of the classroom.

The basic principles of suggestology are found in a classroom using suggestopedy. Those are: (1) Interpersonal communication and mental activity are always conscious and paraconscious at the same time; (2) Every stimulus is associated, coded, symbolized and generalized; (3) Every perception is complex.¹⁰

Because of the rapid speed of learning and the love of learning which people continue to have suggestopedy gives us the possibility of letting people become renaissance people, people familiar with all past human experience and also aware of the newest developments. It will permit people to "liberate and stimulate not only memory, but the whole personality - interests, perceptions, intellectual activity, motivation, creativity, and moral development."¹¹ After studying in a suggestopedic manner the student learns to create this po for himself, and from then on can take over a great amount of his own liberating.

At present suggestopedy is being used in many parts of the world. In Bulgaria, all of the public schools are revising the teaching system. (The First Grade curriculum can be taught in three months). The change is as rapid as teachers can be trained to teach this way. The Soviet Union uses suggestopedy. It trained the guides for the Olympics in various languages using this method. Various European countries have programs. Canada

10. Ibid. pp. 19, 20

11. Ibid. p. 19

has used suggestopedy to help to make its civil servants bi-lingual. Various people in South America have been trained at the Lozanov Institute in Silver Spring, MD, USA. There are a number of centers in the US where suggestopedy is being used.

It is interesting to consider the fact that "educational systems which succeed in liberating the pupil from fear and from the routine social suggestive norm of his limited powers, in line with psychophysiology, will easily achieve their pedagogical aims." ¹²

12. Ibid, p.29

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