1981

Suggestopedia: New Use of Innate Mental Capacities

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SUGGESTOPEDIA:
NEW USE OF INNATE MENTAL CAPACITIES

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the
School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.

October 1981

This project by Phyllis Crowell is accepted in its present form.

Date 12/1/81 Principal Adviser Richard Gould

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12-11-81

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses certain characteristics of human mental functioning--an understanding of which sheds light on the mechanism of suggestopedia. These characteristics are: (1) the electrical impulses produced by the brain, and in particular, the alpha brain-waves, which are characteristic of a calm state of mind which is believed to be optimum for accelerated learning, (2) the division of left and right brain hemisphere functioning and perception--with the right (intuitive) functions being a focus as the receiver of suggestion (subliminal stimuli from the environment; the moving force in suggestopedia), and (3) the conscious vs. the paraconscious functions of the brain which tie the first two characteristics together. Studies indicate that paraconscious processes, although not fully understood, include powers or abilities not previously recognized, which can be channeled or harnessed for accelerated learning.

This paper then briefly discusses the principles of suggestopedia, and then gives examples of classroom application of suggestopedic techniques.

Crowell, Phyllis

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BACKGROUND

In the early 1970's, educators in the West began hearing stories of an educational breakthrough in Bulgaria--where students were learning at fantastically accelerated rates. The reports seemed incredible. People were learning from 5 to 50 times more material in less time, using a new method, seemingly quite different from conventional methods. The first documented evidence of this in America was reported in the book Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain, by Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder. Ostrander and Schroeder had traveled through Soviet bloc countries, researching advances in parapsychology, and had met with the mastermind behind these educational advances--Dr. Georgi Lozanov, in Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria, Dr. Lozanov is known not only for experimentation and research in education using his suggestopedic techniques, but he is also known as a leading physician, psychotherapist, and parapsychologist as well. Within the field of parapsychology can be found investigations of such topics as extrasensory perception (ESP), clairvoyance, telekinesis, and other psychic phenomena. Some of the success of suggestopedia is thought to be the result of its use of certain parapsychological capabilities that naturally exist within the brain. Only recently have some serious scientists acknowledged their existence and been willing to do research into these extra powers and potentials of the human mind.

In Ostrander and Schroeder's Psychic Discoveries... Chapter 22 entitled "Mission Control Center for the Mind," there are descriptions of Dr. Lozanov's work with suggestopedia at the Institute of Suggestology and Parapsychology in Sophia, Bulgaria. Suggestopedic language classes are described where students are smiling and enjoying their lessons, where they are relaxing in comfortable airplane-seat-like chairs, in tastefully decorated rooms that look more like lounges or living rooms than classrooms, with subdued lighting, and soothing music playing. The students are listening either to music or to the instructor, who is reading material in a certain rhythm and with varied intonation patterns. Intriguing statements are made, such as, "...hundreds of people from all levels of society learned entire two-year language courses in as little as twenty days."[1] Furthermore, the students were coming out of the classes feeling relaxed, refreshed, and joyful.

The revelations about the results being achieved in Bulgaria stimulated other researchers and educators to investigate further. A few traveled to Bulgaria and observed, or studied under, Dr. Lozanov in order to better know the elements of his approach.

Canadian and American researchers brought back from Bulgaria as much information about the suggestopedic system as they could,[2] and they began experimenting with the system in their classrooms, and

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[1]Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder, Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 299.

[2]For a historical review of the introduction and diffusion of suggestology/suggestopedia in the West, see:

Owen L. Caskey, "Suggestology in the United States," Journal of Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching, Fall & Winter (1977), 105-117.

Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder with Nancy Ostrander, "Chapter 3: Jet Speed Learning Takes Off in the West," Superlearning (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 41-61.

telling others about it. Reports of positive results began to appear from the experimental classes--although they were not as spectacular as those reported in Bulgaria. Still, educators in the West were very interested, but cautious. There was no rigorous experimental format, nor ways to accurately quantify results. Most reports showed positive results with "further research indicated."

One of the first areas in the United States where suggestopedia received a favorable reception and much interest was in Iowa--a state which has always had a reputation for being progressive in its educational outlook.

In 1971-72, a pilot project was conducted in teaching Spanish at Iowa State University by Donald Schuster. In this project, there was one experimental class which was taught using suggestopedia, and two control classes which were taught in the conventional way. The two control classes each met four hours a week plus had a two-hour lab once a week. The experimental class had only one two-hour session per week--which combined lecture and laboratory aspects of learning Spanish.

At the end of the quarter, the results on the common lecture exam and on the laboratory exam in oral comprehension showed no significant difference in the scores of all three classes. Thus, the experimental class had learned the same amount of Spanish as the control classes, but in about one-third the amount of time.[1]

In another experiment[2], at the University of Iowa, in the summer

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[1]Donald H. Schuster, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the Suggestive-Accelerative Lozanov Method in Teaching Beginning Spanish," Journal of SALT, Spring (1976), 41-47.

[2]Ray Benitez-Bordon and Donald B. Schuster, "Foreigh Language Learning Via the Lozanov Method: Pilot Studies," Journal of SALT, Spring (1976), 3-15.

of 1975, two consecutive Spanish classes were taught by Ray Benitez-Bordon, using the Lozanov method (suggestopedia). The results showed more than a full year's achievement in Spanish in two weeks.

Such results and the interest of a number of educators stimulated the formation of the Society of Suggestive-Accelerative Learning and Teaching, and in 1976 this Society began publishing the Journal of SALT--a clearinghouse for articles and research publications in SALT, or suggestopedia, or the Lozanov Method.

THE NATURAL BRAIN PROCESSES THAT SUGGESTOPEDIA USES

To understand suggestopedia, one has to understand the phenomenom of suggestion and how it works. And to understand this phenomenom, one must understand the nature of the human psyche and the human mind. The human mind/brain is, of course, a complex system. In particular, there are three aspects of the mind, an understanding of which is helpful in organizing one's understanding of its functioning in relationship to suggestopedia. These three aspects are:

The Role of the Alpha Frequency in Brain Functioning

Left Brain / Right Brain Functioning

Conscious vs. Paraconscious Functioning

The Role of the Alpha Frequency in Brain Functioning

The brain produces a kind of energy, which can be detected and measured as electrical impulses. The measurement of the brain's impulses or "brain waves" can be done on an electroencephalograph (EEG). In studying the brain, scientists have found that the brain emits four distinct levels of electrical pulsations--measured in cycles per second (Hz)--each of which is associated with a different level of physical and mental activity. These different patterns are not mutually exclusive, since more than one kind of brain wave can be present at the same time. But in certain states of mind, more of a certain pattern of brain waves can be present.

Delta. The lowest frequency of brain waves--.5 to 3.5 cycles per second--is the frequency band called Delta. When a person is sound asleep, his brain "pulses" at this slow frequency. Very little is known about this level of brain activity except that it is associated

with very deep sleep. It seems that at this frequency only the basic "involuntary" bodily functions (circulatory, respiratory systems, e.g.) are directed to operate--at a slow, restful pace.

Theta. The next higher frequency of brain functioning is called Theta. In Theta the brain pulses at 4 to 7 cycles per second. This frequency of brain-waves is associated with light sleep. A person passes through this level when s/he is going into or coming out of deep slumber. Some yogis are able to consciously bring their brains to Theta through profound relaxation and meditation.

Beta. In the wide awake state, most people's brains are functioning at the highest frequency of electrical impulses of the brain--14 to 21+ cycles per second. This level is called Beta. This is the level of brain-wave activity which is associated with wide awake analytical functioning, and with the operation of the five physical senses. This is the level of day to day waking state functioning, such as talking, walking, reading, cooking, watching television, teaching, and playing. It is at this level of functioning that, until recently, it was assumed all learning took place. Present research now indicates that learning may also occur at a lower brain frequency.

Alpha. The frequency of brain waves between Theta and Beta is Alpha. At this level, the brain pulses at a frequency of 7 to 14 cycles per second. This is a quiet, meditative, but energetic state of mind. It is associated with mental relaxation, meditation, or the quiet state that occurs before falling asleep or when just waking up. It is also associated with certain types of paranormal functioning, with dreaming in REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, and now with accelerated learning and hypermnesia or super-memory.

The alpha frequency of brain waves has been shown to be characteristic of the waking state of deep relaxation and concentration associated with extrasensory perception and other psychic or paranormal functioning. For example, two Soviets, Karl Nikolaiev and Yuri Kamensky, demonstrated under scientifically controlled conditions their ability to communicate telepathically, using this state of mind, between Moscow and Leningrad. Both were monitored by equipment that recorded respiration, heartbeat, eye movements, muscle activity, and brain waves. Nikolaiev told reporters that he was usually given about half an hour to get himself into the proper state of relaxation. He said he had to "be completely relaxed, but attentive." The EEG recordings showed that during this time his brain waves were a steady alpha.[1] Kamensky also said he had to be comfortable and relaxed in order to send telepathic transmissions.[2] They were able to demonstrate conclusively that Kamensky could send telepathic messages of objects seen or sounds heard from Moscow to Nikolaiev in Leningrad.

In a different study, at the Menninger Clinic in the early 1970's, alpha brain waves were characteristic of the moment of self anaesthesia when Jack Schwarz, a Dutch immigrant to the U.S., would push a knitting needle through his arm and feel no pain. During the demonstration of his abilities, his brain would be emitting beta waves, but at the moment the needle was put into his arm, his brain-waves slowed to alpha. After the needle was pulled out, the hole in his arm would close, and his brain waves would go back to beta.[3]

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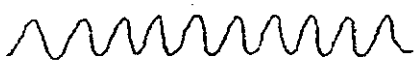
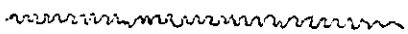
[1]Ostrander and Schroeder, Psychic Discoveries..., p. 22.

[2]Ibid., p. 122.

[3]Adam Smith, Powers of Mind (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), pp. 114-116.

LEVELS OF BRAIN FUNCTIONING

BRAIN FREQUENCY	1 second	ACTIVITIES CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS LEVEL
DELTA .5 - 3.5 Hz		SOUND SLEEP UNCONSCIOUSNESS
THETA 4 - 7 Hz		LIGHT SLEEP DEEP MEDITATION
ALPHA 8 - 13 Hz		FALLING ASLEEP / WAKING UP MEDITATION / RELAXATION INSPIRATION / CREATIVITY SELF HEALING PSYCHIC FUNCTIONING SUPER-MEMORY
BETA 14 - 21+ Hz		WIDE AWAKE FUNCTIONING SPEAKING / LISTENING CALCULATING / ANALYZING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ANXIETY / TENSION STUDYING / TEACHING ETC.

In investigations carried out by Dr. Lozanov on Indian yogis, he found that the EEG's showed that when yogis with supermemory performed "super" mental feats, their bodies were in a state of profound relaxation, and their brain waves were at alpha rhythm.[1]

Alpha frequency of brain functioning appears to be a special level --a doorway of sorts to certain unconscious functions or abilities of the mind. It is a frequency at which the mind can be very active, but

[1] Ostrander and Schroeder, Superlearning, p. 63.

at the same time self-healing or self-restoring. For example, during sleep, the alpha dream state is where the brain busily files away the day's activities, and yet, on awakening, a person feels restored and relaxed. Evidence now indicates that learning at the alpha frequency can also be both profitable and relaxing in the same restorative way. As a result, this is the brain activity level that suggestopedia attempts to make use of, and induce in a classroom situation.

At the Institute of Suggestology in Bulgaria, investigations showed that when conscious beta level activity increased, fatigue increased. When mentally quieting alpha level activity increased, feelings of rest and relaxation resulted--even when learning was taking place. Lozanov says, "In the alpha state, peripheral perceptions become powerful stimuli. Such paraconscious learning is accelerated because of the positive emotional-motivational processes involved."[1]

Left Brain / Right Brain Functioning

Another area of development in knowledge about the brain is the discoveries about the functions of its two hemispheres. Our current knowledge about the workings of the two has developed out of the original work of Dr. Roger Sperry, who was able to study the isolated functions in epileptic patients whose left and right cortical connections had been severed in order to control their epileptic fits.[2]

There is a kind of division of labor between the two sides of the brain. The left hemisphere of the brain is responsible for the physical movement of the right side of the body, and the right hemisphere

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[1] Cecelia Pollack, "Suggestology and Suggestopedia Revisited," Journal of SALT, Spring (1979), 26.

[2] Smith, p. 61.

controls the physical operations of the left side of the body. However, in addition, the left hemisphere controls or deals with the logical, analytical, reasoning mental processes that occur. Speech is usually centered in the left side of the brain, as are the other sequential, logic-dependent thinking activities, such as doing mathematics problems. "The left brain is verbal, perceives detail, analyzes, calculates."[1]

On the other hand, the right hemisphere, in addition to controlling the left side of the body's motor functions, also controls the artistic, esthetic, musical, hypnotizable, sexual, intuitive processes of the person. "Right hemisphere consciousness seems to be primarily subjective, receives secondary consideration in our education, and finds its greatest expression in the arts. It is generally accompanied by Alpha or Theta brain-wave emanation." Whereas, left hemisphere consciousness, "is objectively oriented, and usually associated with the generation of much Beta brain-wave activity."[2]

Education in the West has traditionally concentrated on developing the left brain skills, and has put a premium on left brain activity (logic and reason), but it is becoming recognized that this is a somewhat lopsided approach. Suggestopedia provides for a more balanced approach in which right brain hemisphere activities are combined with left brain hemisphere activities, and the impact is much more effective than under old systems of learning.

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[1]Marilyn Ferguson, "Current Brain Research and Human Potential for Learning," Journal of SALT, Winter (1976), 361.

[2]José Silva and Philip Miele, The Silva Mind Control Method (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), p. 214.

Conscious vs. Paraconscious Functioning

Scientists and educators have been discovering and documenting evidence that the brain holds within itself--in a vast storehouse of unconsciousness--memories or predispositions from all experience of the past up to the present. The "past" could be all that has happened, or all experience, in one's life from the day of birth, or perhaps from the moment of conception, up to the present moment. There is sufficient documentation of unconscious memory storage of past events in one's lifetime to justify recognition of this "unconscious" reality, and its relevance to attitudes and actions of the present.

Dr. Wilder Penfield, a Canadian neurosurgeon, was instrumental in demonstrating that there is a record of past experiences which is carried on the "tapes" of the brain. While performing brain surgery, with local anesthesia, so that the patients remained awake and conscious, he found that when he stimulated certain parts of the brain with a probe, the patients would vividly recall long forgotten experiences of the past, complete with the emotions and sensations of the actual events.[1]

Similar events have occurred with the use of some drugs. For example, Adam Smith describes a vivid recollection of a long forgotten past (especially emotionally charged) event which was "re-lived" by him in an experimental LSD trip.[2]

There is also the case of a woman who, under hypnosis, could recall verbatum, the conversation of the doctors attending her during childbirth while she was supposedly unconscious. She had been put to

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[1]Smith, pp. 25-26. Ostrander & Schroeder, Superlearning, p. 21.

[2]Smith, pp. 28-30.

sleep for the birth operation, but apparently her senses continued to function because she could later, under hypnosis, recall the conversation of the attending doctor and nurses, and their emotions. And her subsequent behavior reflected her reactions to the conversation.[1]

All of these cases illustrate that there is a lot more in the unconscious memory than has been acknowledged and utilized before now. While it has been a maxim of psychiatry that unconscious memories affect present behavior, the idea that possibly everything from the past is imprinted somewhere in the memory is startling. Obviously if this is true, this would be of great use to the educational process. If we can find the key to probing the unconscious, we might find a way to gain access to any information that has passed through the senses--even if it is forgotten to the "conscious." It also gives us an idea of how feats of super memory are possible.

Within the brain, conscious perceptions and reactions and memories are like the tip of an iceberg of mental processes. The bulk of the iceberg is the unconscious processes which lie below the surface of conscious awareness.

Unconscious mental activity occurs on a number of levels. It can result from conscious as well as unconscious stimulation. The interaction of all stimuli in the brain create a "set-up" or "psychological disposition"[2] which determines a person's perception and reaction to a present or future stimulus.

For example, unconscious perceptions surround any stimulus and become a part of the event. These perceptions might be esthetic or

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[1]Silva and Miele, p. 43.

[2]Gabriel Racle, "The Key Principles of Suggestopaedia," Journal of SALT, Fall (1976), 150.

intuitive or emotional. For example, X is talking with Y. Y tells X that, "Everything is fine. Yes, I'm happy." But X perceives, through Y's body posture, tone of voice, or through just "a feeling," that Y is not really happy at all. So on a conscious, rational basis, X is receiving one message from Y's words. But on a non-rational, but intuitive level, he is receiving another message.

An example of a psychological disposition which affects a person unconsciously even in the future is the case of a person who, as a child, hears his parents talk about "Turks." The disdain in their tone of voice whenever they talk about Turks delivers a message. Furthermore, he might hear his parents say Turks are dangerous people. Later in life, that person as an adult does not like, avoids contact with, and even fears Turks--though he cannot consciously put his finger on just exactly why.

Obviously a great deal is perceived on an unconscious level. This perception can, of course, affect a student in the educational process. The suggestopedic approach attempts to make the teacher aware that this can happen and thus encourages her/him to avoid any presentation that might be perceived in a negative way by the unconscious levels of the student. And at the same time, it encourages her/him to utilize the unconscious levels for positive emotional and subject matter input.

Reserves of the mind. Lozanov postulated that there are certain "reserves of the mind" which include such abilities as creativity, ability to self-heal, ESP, clairvoyance, precognition, and accelerated learning. He believed these abilities can be engaged through unconscious mental activity. The power of suggestion is one external way such mental activity may be stimulated.

LOZANOV'S SUGGESTOPEDIA

Suggestopedia is the application of suggestology, the study of suggestion, to education. Suggestions, in their psychological sense as used here, are sub-sensory signals or subliminal stimuli which come from the physical or social environment, and which are absorbed into the unconscious mind before being observed and/or analyzed by the conscious.[1]

Lozanov identified six "suggestive" variables which he found useful as a focus for classroom application. They overlap in meaning and application, but through them, the basics of suggestopedia are covered. In his most recent book he narrows down the basic elements of a suggestopedic class to three things: (1) enjoyment of learning and absence of tension, (2) unity of the conscious and the unconscious, and (3) a suggestive link between the two.[2] But these three include as integral, the six suggestive elements, which are:

(1) Authority - This refers to the prestige the teacher and the institution have in the eyes of the students. The level of expectancy and motivation of students is at least in part subconsciously determined by their perception of the level of competency of the teacher and the institution.

(2) Infantilization - This is a very desirable mental set which should be encouraged among students. It is a mental set which is like that of a child who is first learning about the world and about life,

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[1] W. Jane Bancroft, "Suggestology and Suggestopedia: The Theory of the Lozanov Method," Journal of SALT, Fall (1976), 191.

[2] Donald H. Schuster, "Review of G. Lozanov's Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedy," Journal of SALT, Spring (1976), 60.

and it is characterized by spontaneity, directness, confidence (trust), and ability to learn without really "trying very hard." It thus results in learning that is easy and joyful.

(3) Double-planeness - This term refers to the dual nature of awareness which can be conscious or peripherally conscious (unconscious)--each kind of awareness delivering its own particular kind of message to the psyche. It also refers to the two types of mental perception characterized by the specific kinds of functioning of the right side of the brain vs. the left side of the brain. Peripheral conscious awareness and right brain functioning are particularly good media for suggestive input because through them learning may result without the traditional effort.

(4) Intonation - This refers to the tone level and emphasis in the voice of the teacher. This is an artistic element which, like all artistic elements, has its effect through right brain functioning. Differences in intonation can, of course, carry emotional meaning. So when material is presented using varying intonation, it carries not only the message of the words that are spoken, but it also carries a message to the right brain of some esthetic or emotional value. Hence the message has greater impact on the psyche.

(5) Rhythm - Rhythm is also an artistic element which is processed in the right brain. The right brain responds to rhythmic factors, especially if the particular rhythm is close to the peaceful body rhythms associated with alpha states of awareness.

Rhythm and intonation are two of a number of artistic elements which, through their effect on the right brain, have great suggestive value. Through them, channels to the unconscious can be opened.

(6) Concert pseudo-passivity - This is a state of mind which has strong suggestive impact. It is a state of mind characterized by profound relaxation and passivity--like that of a concert-goer. This state of mind is part of a suggestive technique--which includes a number of right brain elements, such as calming music, rhythm and intonation, and relaxation so as to slow brain waves to alpha, and to slow bodily processes--lowering blood pressure and heartbeat to a restful level. This suggestive technique in which concert pseudo-passivity is used is called the concert session. In a state of concert pseudo-passivity channels to the unconscious tend to open, and material works its way via peripheral conscious awareness into the long term memory of the subject or student. In this state, students learn more effectively than they would via conscious awareness. And of course, they learn more pleasurably than they would if conscious effort was involved.

CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS OF SUGGESTOPEDIA

Enjoyment

The teacher and the classroom presentation must be consistent with the suggestion to the student that s/he will learn and will enjoy the process. The teacher must be well educated in the theoretical concepts of suggestopedia and be favorably disposed not only to the system but to teaching and interacting with students as well. In addition the teacher must be well qualified, comfortable and confident with the subject being taught.

The classroom environment should be comfortable--but above all it should be conducive to learning. In some schools where suggestopedia has been used, the classrooms were made to look and feel like lounges or living rooms--to avoid the de-suggestive barrier (stemming perhaps from prior negative experiences in school classrooms) of negativism to classrooms.[1]

It is probably not necessary to remodel a classroom or buy a whole new set of furniture. The classroom environment must simply be consistent with all the other suggestive (sub-conscious) signals that operate in making it a positive learning environment.

Relaxation

A teacher who is not trained in specific suggestopedic pedagogic techniques can still utilize some of the principles of suggestopedia. For example, one technique that can be very useful, even if no others are used, is the relaxation procedure--which has a mind calming effect, and which helps students to focus in on the subject under study.

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[1] See, e.g., Charles Schmid, "Language in New Dimensions," Journal of SALT, Fall (1978), 181-196.

It is useful to begin and/or perhaps end a class with a relaxation exercise. Usually the exercise will be "guided" by the teacher, but over time, once the students learn the techniques and become familiar with them, the teacher may simply put on relaxation music and cue the students that they are to do their own relaxation exercises. A relaxation procedure might include any one or all of the following:

(a) Have the students assume a comfortable position and close their eyes. Their spines should be straight with the head in line with the spine. (It is my opinion that sitting in an upright position is preferable to a reclining position, as the student is more likely to remain alert rather than start to drift off to sleep when he becomes very relaxed.)

(b) Play calming, peaceful music at a low volume as background music. Largo movements of baroque music have been found to be very good for this, but any music which has an even beat and "peaceful" quality to it is useful.

(c) Do tension relaxation exercise(s). For example: As a guided exercise, the teacher might quietly instruct the students to focus their attention on their toes. Have them tense their toes. Then work up the body from toes to head. Tense the feet, then ankles, then calves, then thighs, fingers, hands, forearms, upper arms, buttocks, pelvic girdle, chest, back, shoulders, neck, chin, cheeks, eyes, forehead, every part of the head. Hold all the tension for a second or two. Then release the tension--starting from the head and move all the way down to the toes in a slow wave of relaxation. (This might be repeated one or two times.)

(d) Use calm, rhythmic breathing. There are different breathing patterns that a teacher might use. For example, (2,4,2) or a (4,4,4,4)

rhythm. In a (4,4,4,4) rhythm, the teacher might instruct the students to inhale slowly to a slow count of four, hold for four, exhale slowly for four, hold for four, and start over again, "Inhale..." The teacher might tap out the 4,4,4,4 rhythm in the beginning stages. The teacher instructs the students to maintain the slow rhythmic breathing throughout the whole relaxation procedure.

(e) Do a visualization exercise that takes the students to a pleasant, peaceful, calming environment. For example, in a quiet, reassuring tone, the teacher instructs the students to think of a very nice place they have been (or would like to be) that is very peaceful. (The teacher might guide them to a specific place that s/he her/himself knows and can describe. Or the teacher might remind the students of some beautiful scenic spot they have all visited together as a class.) It might be a mountain top, or along a beach, or in some woods. Then they are instructed to visualize it as vividly as possible. If it is a beach, look at the waves gently breaking on the shore. "Look at the clouds drifting slowly across the sky. Feel the gentle breezes caressing your skin. Breathe in the fresh crisp air. Look around and enjoy the peace and beauty of your surroundings." The teacher might then leave them there for a minute or so in silence.

(f) Do a pleasant learning experience recall exercise. Tell the students to recall a time when learning was easy. "Try to remember a specific experience. Then look around at the environment of that experience. Remember the feelings of the experience. Remember the smell of it. Remember the sounds you heard. Remember how you felt. Try to hold on to all the sensations of that experience."

(g) The teacher begins to bring them back to the classroom environment. In a quiet, calm, slow voice, s/he says something like, "Begin to bring your awareness back to here and now. Become aware of your body--in the classroom, sitting in your chair. You feel comfortable, relaxed, refreshed, and alert. When you are ready, open your eyes." After a pause of some seconds, the students will begin, one by one, to open their eyes. They will be in a very receptive, alert state of mind.

At this point, however, in the early days of doing this kind of exercise, sometimes there will be students who have fallen asleep. They should be nudged and waken immediately. And then proceed with the lesson without further ado.

When relaxation exercises are done, they tend to slow down the bodily rhythms (heartbeat, blood pressure, and brain waves). That process aids in overcoming or overriding tension and at least for a while, "de-suggestive barriers" ("hang-ups" might be an equivalent term) or sub-conscious blocks.

To a certain extent, when a person goes through a relaxation process, he rids himself of bodily tensions--which themselves might have been due to problems or tensions being dealt with in the brain. By easing away the physical (bodily) tension or that physical manifestation of a mental tension, the person or psyche is in a calmer, open-minded, "non-blocked" state. The reduction of tension seems to open channels for energy to flow.

Concert Session

The concert session is probably the most important of the suggestopedic techniques. The state of concert pseudo-passivity is used in the concert session. The use of a concert session has been found to be useful for impressing material in the memory. It is especially useful for reinforcing material which has already been actively presented to the class. Throughout the concert session,

> ...the students are behaviorally passive and make no conscious, intellectual effort to memorize or understand the program that is being presented to them. However, at the unconscious level, their emotions are involved in the program... Simultaneously with the program and music presented, there occur, in the students, complicated internal processes regarding emotions, moods and associations.[1]

The teacher helps the students to become deeply relaxed, by using relaxation procedures--perhaps similar to the one detailed previously. Peaceful music is played at a background level--which helps create a positive emotional response to the material being presented, whether the material is a history lecture, an English Literature lecture, or a language dialogue. The material to be remembered or impressed on the minds of the students is read rhythmically and in varying intonations and pitches simultaneously with the music. The students are told not to concentrate on the reading, but rather to just relax as much as possible.

Material presented to the mind in this peripherally conscious way becomes impressed more strongly on the long term memory than does material which a student consciously concentrates on and tries to remember.[2]

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[1] Bancroft, p. 213.

[2] Pollack, p. 24.

Other Classroom Considerations

A number of programs have incorporated into their language lessons a technique used in Lozanov classes of giving the students new identities at the beginning of a program. Their new names are those of people of the language being learned, and professions are common to the target culture, but have a certain amount of prestige. The students maintain those identities throughout the semester or program, and only the administrators know their real identities. This gives the students alter egos of sorts through which they can try out new modes of behavior. And through these alter egos, there is less fear of failure to repress their spontaneity, because it is the alter egos who make the "mistakes", not themselves. This technique turns the students on to the game-playing atmosphere of the class, and gets them involved right from the beginning in the spirit of fun in learning the language. This technique encourages development of the mental set of "infantilization."

The mental set of "infantilization" can be stimulated with yet other learning activities or materials where the child-like spirit of fun and spontaneity are re-captured--as in game-playing, make-believe situations, contests, and the use of artistic elements (like songs, stories, pictures, and skits) in which are embedded the facts being taught. In devising these activities and materials the teacher should combine facts or skills to be learned with suggestive, or right brain, elements for greater impact, or to harness the double planes of the conscious and the unconscious at the same time.

Artistic elements, such as music, poetry, facial expression, body language, painting, drawing,dramatic emotions, etc. should be integrated into the subject matter of a class and vice versa. All the

elements of the fine and performing arts have their impact through the "unconscious" right hemisphere of the brain.

So, in a language class, for example, during the active presentation of a lesson, the teacher should be as much of an actor or actress as possible--acting out the parts of a dialogue, or dramatically reading the material, or comedically elaborating on details, or otherwise injecting emotions or feeling into the material either through voice or actions. And when the students practice the material or elaborate on what they have learned, they are encouraged to put it into the form of original skits, or to inject emotion and creativity into it in other ways as well.

Throughout all of this it can be seen that what is most important to the teacher is the knowledge of the principles of suggestopedia. Application of the principles to her/his particular subject area will then require a certain amount of creativity, as well as sensitivity to the unique characteristics of the particular students and class conditions. The teacher must constantly devise and revise the presentation and elaboration situations as necessary. But as long as s/he is aware of how suggestive elements affect the psyche, s/he will be better able to make the lessons joyful events of learning and growth.

CONCLUSION

In this day and age of space-age technological development, and with the information explosion very much a part of our lives, it has become more important than ever before to be able to absorb and process more information more rapidly and more efficiently. Our educational systems need new life injected into them in order to keep up with the advances. However, old educational approaches have sometimes tended to actually limit development and to stifle creativity through imagined limitations to the powers of the human mind and to human development.

Schools today are often sources of great frustration for many students who lack motivation due to boring lessons, lack of purpose, repressive teachers and administrators, and family and societal pressures. Some schools drive students to become "drop-outs." Some pressures drive students to commit suicide! The frustration the students feel is compounded by the poor methods.

Suggestopedia does seem to be making advances in education in terms of faster and more efficient learning. What's more, the faster and more efficient learning is accompanied by enjoyment, and easing of tension and frustration. This is making for better motivated students who are exceeding norms of expectation.

While much of what is being advocated (competent, confident teachers, pleasant classrooms, enjoyment of learning) have been tenets of educational philosophy for a long time, suggestopedia offers concrete psychological and pedagogical evidence to explain and prove its effectiveness. Though we don't understand it totally, we can't ignore it. And it makes the future for education look much brighter!

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