BLOCK 4.
The past meets the present: Language teaching methods in the 20ᵗʰ and 21ˢᵗ centuries

Sub-block 4.2.
Humanistic or Holistic methods

Unit 4.2.4. Suggestopedia

Outline

1. Objectives of this unit
2. Goal of Suggestopedia
3. Historical background of Suggestopedia
4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia
5. Critical assessment of Suggestopedia

1. Objectives of this unit

1. Understand the bases that inspired Suggestopedia.
2. Know the mechanisms that influence language learning: brain mechanisms and sensory mechanisms.
3. Critically analyse a real class using Suggestopedia.
4. Identify the influence of Suggestopedia on CLT and spin-offs.
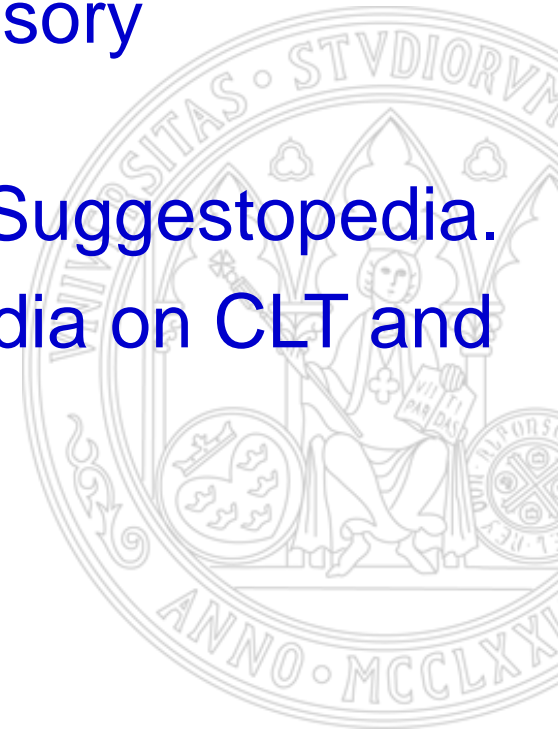
2. Goal of Suggestopedia

To attain rapid conversational proficiency at an advanced level

1

3. Historical background of Suggestopedia

- ✓ *Suggestopedia* or *Desuggestopedia*

- ✓ Based on Suggestology: a *"science* […] *concerned with the systematic study of the nonrational and/or nonconscious influences"* (Stevick, 1976: 42).

- ✓ Yoga and Soviet psychology influences

- ✓ The human brain only uses … % of its capacity! Is it possible to use the remaining … %?

- ✓ "Memorization in learning by the suggestopedic method seems to be accelerated 25 times over that in learning by conventional methods" (Lozanov, 1978: 27)

- ✓ Most distinctive characteristics:

> *Watch the following video from minute 4:07 to 4:19; 4:41 to 5:00.*
> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX4JFEUgqlg&feature=related
>
> *Which distinctive characteristics are mentioned?*

- ▪ Decoration
- ▪ Furniture
- ▪ Arrangement of the classroom
- ▪ Authoritative behaviour of the teacher
- ▪ **Music** (therapy → **relaxation**, social relations…)
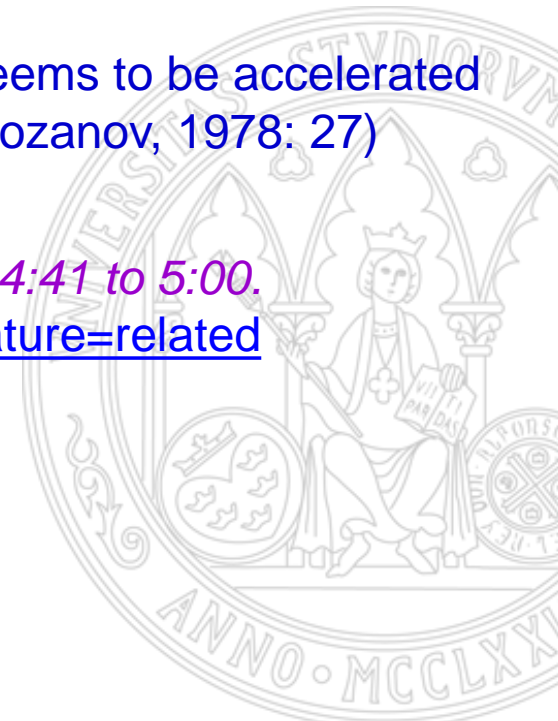
4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

❑ Theory of language (nature of language, including approach to culture)

- ▪ Not a proper theory of language (= TPR, Silent Way). Lexis is emphasised as well as the communicative nature of language.

- ▪ Culture as the lifestyle of the L2 speakers. Fine arts too.
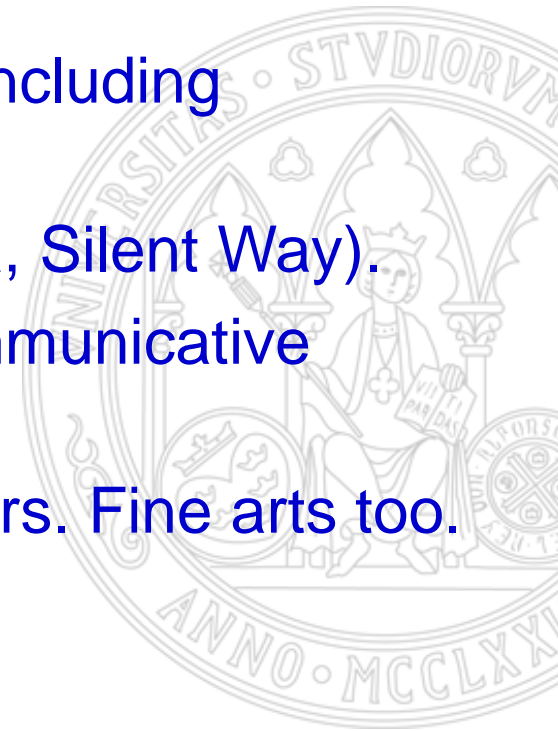
4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

❑ Theory of learning (learning principles)

- ▪ Six principal components to "defeat *suggestions*" so that learning can take place:

  1. Authority
  2. Infantilization
  3. Double-planedness
  4. Intonation
  5. Rhythm
  6. Concert pseudo-passiveness.

- ▪ Pattern of learning: fixation, reproduction, new creative production

4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 1. The Why. Underlying principles and beliefs (approach)

❑ Theory of teaching (pedagogical principles)

- Inductive approach to grammar learning and teaching (practice and inference). Students must learn by "rolling over" the language through exposure and interaction.

- Text as the basic unit of teaching.

- Grammatical explanations discouraged.

- Formal accuracy is emphasised.

- Use of the L1 for translation purposes.

- Teacher as the authority in the classroom.

- Students must be in a pseudo-passive state.
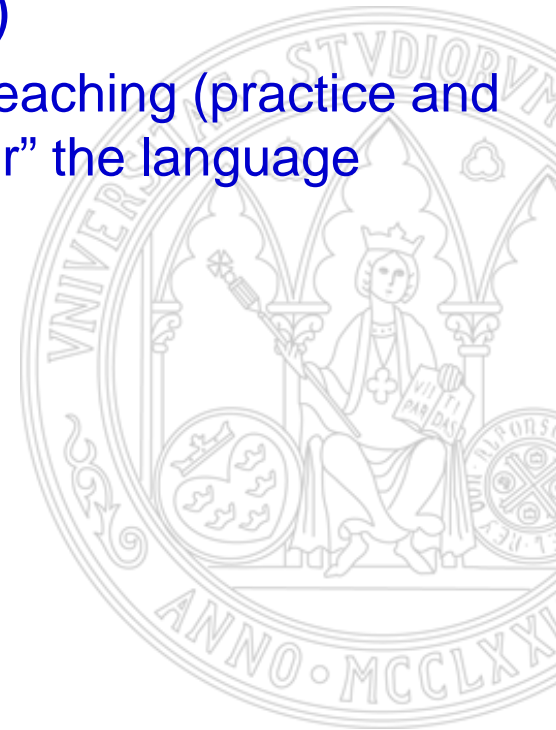
4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 2. The What. Objectives of teaching. Syllabus specifications

- ❑ Model of language: formal texts
- ❑ Emphasised language areas: Vocabulary and grammar (as subsidiary goal) of texts read. Texts are graded by lexis and grammar.
- ❑ Emphasised skills:
  - ▪ At the beginning, oral skills (listening and above all speaking).
  - ▪ Reading also included as reinforcement.
  - ▪ Little emphasis on writing.
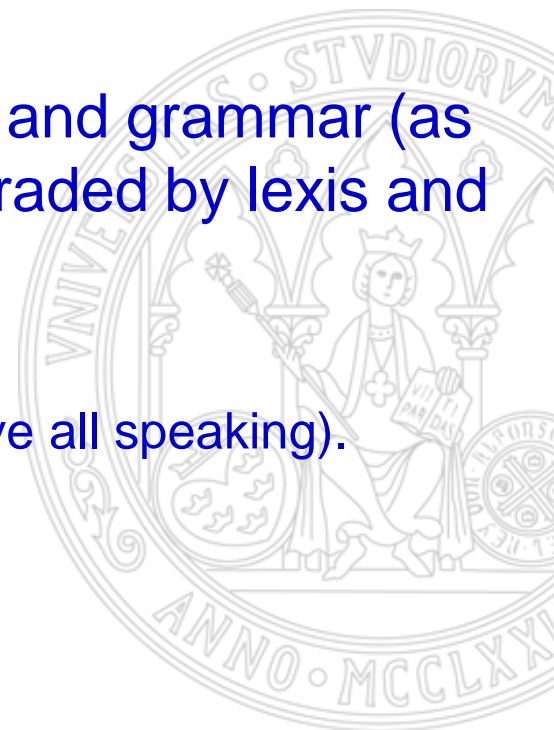
4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Activities

- Listening and reading activities
- Relaxation techniques
- Imitation, question and answer, role play, games, songs

4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ **Procedure (adapted from Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011: 79; Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 102, 105):**

- 30 days. 10 units of study. Classes are held 4 hours a day, 6 days a week.

- Dialogue: 800-1,200 words + vocabulary list and grammatical commentary.

- Socially homogeneous groups, twelve in number, equally divided in men and women.

- Students select target language names and new occupations.

- Unit study is organised in three days: Day 1 (half a day); Days 2 and 3 (full days), with primary and secondary elaboration.

4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ **Procedure (adapted from Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011: 79; Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 103, 105):**

- New texts: handouts of 800 words. Two columns: L2 and L1. Some notes on vocabulary and grammar which correspond to boldfaced items in the dialogue.

- Oral review section of previous language material (micro-studies and macro-studies)

- First phase / receptive phase: Teacher presents the dialogue during two 'concerts' or "séance".

  o First concert: Teacher reads the dialogue, matching her voice to the rhythm and pitch of the music. Students follow the target language text and can consult the translation.

  o Second concert: students listen calmly while the teacher reads the dialogue at normal speed.

  "At the end, students silently leave the room. They are not told to do any homework on the lesson they have just had except for reading it cursorily once before going to bed and again before getting up in the morning". (Lozanov, 1978: 272).

- Second phase or *active* phase: primary elaboration (imitation, reading, question-and-answer exercises); secondary elaboration (dramatizations, games, songs).

4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of teacher (including feedback issues)

- Authority in the classroom.

    Why do you think so? Does this not clash with the affective factor and learner-centredness feature of Humanistic Methods?

- Creator of situations which foster the learner to be as suggestible as possible; encouraging reception of language content

- Errors are correctly gently.

4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of teacher (including feedback issues)

▪ Several expected teacher behaviours that contribute to positive reception and retention of the material by the learner (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 104):

1) *Show absolute confidence in the method.*

2) *Display fastidous conduct in manners and dress.*

3) *Organize properly and strictly observe the initial stages of the teaching process –this includes choice and play of music, as well as punctuality.*

4) *Maintain a solemn attitude toward the session.*

5) *Give tests and respond tactfully to poor papers (if any).*

6) *Stress global rather than analytical attitudes toward material.*

7) *Maintain a modest enthusiasm.*

4. Analysis of the components of Suggestopedia

Axis 3. The How. Activities through which the selected content is transmitted to the students and other procedural aspects

❑ Roles of students

Pseudo-passive state. No manipulation or explicit study of the materials. Infantilization.

❑ Roles of instructional materials (Richards & Rodgers, 2001: 86):

- Direct support materials: text and tape.

   "Traumatic themes and distasteful lexical material should be avoided" (Lozanoz, 1978: 278).

- Indirect support materials:

   o Learning environment or the appearance of the classroom (bright and cheery);

   o the furniture (recycling chairs arranged in a circle)

   o and the music (Baroque largo).

5. Critical assessment of Suggestopedia

Can you think of any positive and negative aspects of Suggestopedia?

5. Critical assessment of Suggestopedia

❑ **Positive aspects (Lado, 1988: 34)**

Racle (1975): statistically significant difference in favour of Suggestopedia for L2 French learners in Canada on a communicative grill specially prepared for the study.

❑ **Negative aspects (Lado, 1988: 34)**

▪ Racle (1975): No statistically significant difference of Suggestopedia learners on the MLA Cooperative Foreign Language Tests.

▪ Canadian subjects in Racle's study reported fatigue from the experience.

Why do you think that those subjects reported fatigue?

• Feasible to implement in small intensive classes in an institution with economic resources –how to extrapolate the whole method to real-life secondary classes with more than 10 students per class?

UNIVERSIDAD DE MURCIA

5. Critical assessment of Suggestopedia

❑ **Influence of Suggestopedia on FLT**

- Relaxation techniques may not be beneficial for everybody…

- "If we have learnt anything at all in the seventies, it is that the art of language teaching will benefit very little from the pseudo-science of suggestology". (Scovel, 1979: 265)

- As Harmer (2007) and Richards & Rodgers (2001) note, instead of rejecting Suggestopedia, a more constructive attitude would be to identify the techniques that seem to be effective and appealing for students and integrate them into the teacher's kit.

2