

The Application of Suggestopedia on Oral English Teaching in Junior High Schools

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Abstract

Suggestopedia was founded by Georgi Lozanov who is a Bulgarian psychotherapist. He introduces this method into educational circles and helps it widely apply into English teaching. Nevertheless, the oral proficiency of Chinese English learners is still at a low level which is extremely urgent to handle with. This study discusses the application of suggestopedia on English spoken language of junior high students. First, it is imperative to make a feasibility analysis on applying this teaching method into English oral teaching of middle schools. Secondly, a relevant oral teaching case is analyzed in detail. After that, the advantages and disadvantages are summarized, which will help suggestopedia better be put into teaching practice.

Key words: Suggestopedia; Spoken English; Junior high students

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1. INTRODUCTION

Suggestopedia was founded in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychotherapist. He successfully applied the method of suggestion to surgery, in which the patient was operated on without anesthetic. Later, suggestopedia was combined with education, which obtained great results especially in foreign language teaching. Lozanov explicitly defines suggestopedia:

“Suggestopedia (in its new desuggestive development as well) is a science for developing different non-manipulative and non-hypnotic methods for teaching/learning of foreign languages and other subjects for every age-group on the level of reserve (potential, unused) capacities of the brain/mind. That means: at least three to five times faster, easier and deeper learning, inner freedom, increasing the motivation for learning, joyful learning and psycho-physiological well-being” (Lozanov, 1978).

Soviet scholars Kapitanova and Schukin draw the following conclusions after comparing the actual effects of suggestopedia method and other teaching methods (Zha & Yuan, 2003):

Teaching Method	Number of Students	Number of Words	Number of Class Hour	Average Number of Words per Class Hour
Suggestopedia	10	2000	120	16.666
Audio-visual Method	8-12	1500	270	5.555
Audio-lingual Method	8-10	3500	700	5
Traditional Method	8-10	4500	840	5.357

Thus it can be seen that suggestopedia is superior to the audio-visual method, audio-lingual method and traditional method in English vocabulary teaching. Zhang Xiuming (1997) conducts a teaching experiment on two classes he taught in Huaqiao University from 1990 to 1992. One class uses the traditional teaching method, and the other class takes suggestopedia method to make reasonable teaching application. And the result is that the passing rate of the experimental class was 87.27%, while the passing rate of the ordinary class was only 3.3%. Of course, the admission level of the ordinary class is lower than that of the experimental class, but two years later, the passing rate of the CET-4 shows such a great disparity, and it is necessary

to admit the effect of the application of suggestopedia.

Suggestion is a kind of unconscious positive-psychological activity. It exists in people's relationship as well as in teaching activities. Zhang Jianzhong (1983) points out the two basic factors of suggestion: unconsciousness and potentiality. Emotion is an important part of unconscious psychological activities, which is closely related to human reason. Under the action of emotion, rational-psychological activities will be carried out more agile and more productive. All conscious activities are based on the combination of the unconscious, and people's daily life activities are under the control of unconsciousness. Unconscious sleeping state is often a continuation of learning. Enjoying light music is the most conducive way to tap the potential of unconscious psychological tendency. This kind of unconscious mental activity focuses people's attention on what they need to learn, thus speeding up learning efficiency. On one hand, the educators believe memory is limited, and so is learning. On the other hand, the psychotherapists reckon that human beings have a great memory potential and a supermemory capacity, so that students can remember far more linguistic materials than is prescribed in the syllabus. At the same time, Zhang (1983) also claims that suggestopedia has two complex suggestive means: authority and infantilization. Prestige refers to the teacher's personal authority and the authority of the information source. It can strengthen the suggestive function of students' memory of language materials. The implication of authority in teaching should not be understood as manipulation or suppression of students, but should be treated as a psychological promoting factor for students. Only in this way can people achieve the childish form of believing in the nature of authority. And infantilization is to treat adults as children, and let them play various roles in a dialogue game in order to create a more pleasant and relaxed feeling as well as a free and unforced atmosphere. When adults want to use a foreign language to communicate with others, an inhabiting effect arouses because they show no flexibility in speaking and lack of confidence. Students learn English in the games organized by the teachers, experience the roles they play, and begin to speak this foreign language easily and naturally. This kind of physiological mechanism in verbal communication forms the exciting state of the central nervous system, and reduces the inhibitory obstacles that hinder free communication.

2. FEASIBILITY OF APPLYING SUGGESTOPEDIA TO ORAL ENGLISH TEACHING

With the continuous expansion of China's reform and opening up, the exchanges between China and foreign countries have become increasingly close. The use of

English for communication has become the need of society. Therefore, in today's education, especially in primary education, how to improve the teaching of oral English has been widely concerned by people. For a long time, there are many problems in oral English teaching in junior high schools, which urgently need to be solved. Song Peng (2012) considers that the students in junior high do not have enough oral training and lack confidence. As is known to all, the traditional English teaching focuses on reading and writing. The teachers often ask the students to practice a lot of grammar, sentence patterns and compositions in class, but rarely practice spoken language. If this goes on for a long time, students will be afraid and nervous when they have daily conversations with others in English. Yang Peng (2020) mentions that the teaching mode of oral English in junior high schools is too single, and the oral level of the teachers in junior high is poor. Although the teachers require the students to speak English more, the time in class is limited, and there are few opportunities to speak English after class. Due to environmental restrictions, junior high school students are difficult to improve their oral English. In addition, part of junior high school English teachers speak English with a strong local dialect, which has a great impact on the idiomatic and the fluency of oral expression. Whereas, the principle of suggestopedia is to unify the conscious and the unconscious of students, create a relaxed and pleasant environment for teaching, and set up a natural teaching scene to help them build up confidence. Therefore, it is feasible to apply suggestopedia to oral English teaching in junior high schools.

3. SUGGESTOPEDIA TEACHING CASES

This paper selects the first unit "Are you getting ready for Spring Festival" in the tenth module of the seventh grade textbook of FLTRP as the teaching material. The focus of the study is that students can clearly express a few phrases related to the Spring Festival activities. Suggestopedia is used to create a more authentic language environment. Through relaxed and enjoyable learning and discussion, students can increase their interest in English learning, stimulate their memory of knowledge, and further improve their oral expression ability. The specific methods are as follows.

3.1 Preparation

A relaxed learning environment is seen as a guarantee of teaching quality in English teaching. Therefore, it is extremely necessary to create a positive and good environment of pseudo-negative suggestion. The teacher takes advantage of the theme of this unit, "Are you getting ready for Spring Festival", decorating the classroom around Spring Festival into a comfortable and joyful style. For example, put up red lanterns and couplets to highlight the festive atmosphere, adjust the classroom light and seat

comfort, etc. At the same time, it is also very important to make full use of music for teaching. The teacher needs to properly understand and apply the “Mozart Effect”. This theory was first put forward by Rauscher in 1993, which aroused a strong response from all walks of life, especially the educational circle. It means the music through the auditory system make people’s spatial recognition nerves become exciting, so as to improve the level of intelligence. This is in line with Lozanov’s emphasis on remembering new language materials with ease and pleasure while enjoying the classical music. In this oral English class, the teacher chooses to play Johann Strauss’ *Blue Danube*, which helps the students improve their learning efficiency in a pseudo-negative state. What’s more, proper preparation of teaching AIDS is also imperative. Around the teaching theme, the teacher can prepare relevant teaching AIDS, such as cleaning hats, red envelopes and so on, and use them in the teaching process to attract students’ interest.

3.2 Teaching Process

First of all, before announcing the formal start of the class, the teacher asks the students to relax themselves by following the teacher’s actions of breathing and exhaling. The teacher: Now let’s play a video clip about Chinese New Year. Let’s watch it. The content of the video is closely related to the material we are going to learn. It involves some things we will do in the New Year, such as cleaning the widows, hanging the couplets on the floor, watching Chunwan and so on. Next, the teacher sets up a real natural situation and asks the students to remember what they would do when the Spring Festival comes. At the same time, teachers should also actively participate in the discussion activities, and share his feelings on the Spring Festival with the students, and then they can have a certain resonance. In the later class, the students can enthusiastically speak and the teacher will not interrupt their speech, but correct some obvious mistakes after that in order to maintain their confidence. One student says she will clean the house before the Spring Festival is coming, another says she will make dumplings with her family, and the last student says her favorite Spring Festival activity is to receive red envelopes from her parents. After the students’ heated discussion, the teacher begins to share his own experience, combining the teaching AIDS prepared before the class.

The teacher uses Power Point to present the text “Are you getting ready for Spring Festival”. This text is in a dialogue form. The two protagonists, Tony and Lingling, are talking on the phone to discussing the Spring Festival. Tony asks what Lingling’s family members and her friends are doing. Then, the teacher can read the material with the change of different tones. At this point, the teacher can play the classical music prepared before, and set off a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. According to the characteristics of the music, the teacher

plays two roles for reading. In the next step, the students need to read the textbook carefully to find out how many people appear in the text and what they are doing. Before allowing them to read the English text, give them a certain amount of time to read the Chinese translation, thereby reducing the difficulty of reading the English text and helping them to understand the content of the textbook. A total of 9 people appear in the article, namely Tony, Lingling, Lingling’s father, Lingling’s mother, Lingling’s aunt, Lingling’s grandmother, Lingling’s grandfather, Daming and Betty. Tong is talking on the phone with Lingling. Lingling is making big red lanterns, while her father is at work. Her mother is busy with cleaning the house and putting things away, her aunt is sweeping the floor, and her grandmother is cooking the meal in the kitchen. As for Lingling’s grandfather, Daming and Betty, they are learning a dragon dance together. After careful reading, ask the students to answer the questions together and write down them on the blackboard. Next, present several pictures related to the activities of the characters in the text on the PPT and encourage the students to clearly answer what they are doing according to the pictures. In this way, it can deepen the memory of those key phrases and oral expressions. Finally, the teacher sets up a role-playing activity and practices speaking again. The teacher chooses two volunteers to play Tony and Lingling in the text, let them emotionally read the text, and give a certain reward after the reading.

As it is an oral English class, the teacher does not assign any related written homework, but asks the students to recall what they learn today before going to bed. They are encouraged to introduce Lingling’s family and her friends’ activities in English to their parents.

4. TEACHING REFLECTION

This is an oral English class for the seventh grade of junior middle school. The choice of using suggestopedia to organize English teaching work very well and achieves the established teaching goal -- to make English teaching class not only learn grammar, vocabulary and sentence patterns, but also develop students’ ability of daily conversation. This allows the advantages of suggestopedia to be fully demonstrated in this type of class.

By arranging a comfortable classroom, pre-class breathing movement as well as music accompaniment, they can create a happy circumstance so as to eliminate the tension of the students and reduce their mental pressure. It is easy to stimulate the students’ imagination and memory, so that the brain can quickly work.

Suggestopedia is also beneficial to unify the students’ consciousness and unconsciousness. In the process of appreciating the video and the information of the text, the students’ unconscious part is gradually stimulated, and they can’t help thinking about what they or their family

members will do in the coming of the New Year. In the process of organizing picture questions and answers and the role-playing, the teaching content is reviewed and consolidated again and again, the knowledge is memorized unconsciously, and then the memory and the teaching effect are significantly improved. In addition, teachers are also required to read the text with vivid expressions and strong feelings as far as possible, so that the learning effect, especially the memory effect will be highly strengthened. Besides, teachers should use rhythm to make the sentences read catchy and beautiful, which will also leave a deep impression on students and enhance the effect of memory.

Suggestopedia focuses on the content rather than the form of the expressions. In class, teachers do not teach new knowledge through specialized operation exercises and mechanical repetition of words, but make students lay emphasis on directly expressing their psychological feelings and emotions in the dialogue. At the same time, teachers will not immediately interrupt students when they make oral grammatical mistakes, as long as these mistakes do not affect the listeners' understanding and communication with each other.

The use of suggestopedia aims to help students establish a high degree of self-confidence. As is known to all, most Chinese second language learners of English always lack confidence in their oral expression. The more afraid they are of making mistakes, the more difficult they will be to speak. In class, teachers will not openly point out students' mistakes, but use "Good", "Well-down", "Excellent" and other words to assist students to enhance their confidence after answering questions. In the meantime, students who actively participate in class activities can also be given certain rewards. These are all positive incentives. Teachers make full use of this kind of suggesting art means combined with the positive incentive method in the teaching process, and encourage students to boldly employ foreign language, which not only make them improve the interest of learning, but also do a favor for them on a high degree of self-confidence.

However, in the teaching practice of suggestopedia, it is also obvious to see its disadvantages. As suggestopedia usually takes implicit and indirect manners, it generally does not create much pressure on students. Therefore, it is

easy to make students too relaxed. This teaching method only involves learners' attitude and their understanding of the content, so it ignores the teaching of traditional knowledge and the guidance of grammar rules. To a certain extent, it will affect the cultivation of learners' language communicative competence. Furthermore, it also overemphasizes that learning a foreign language is supposed to be based on people's mother tongue. Students should always complete the learning of the second language with the help of their mother tongue, which is not necessarily conducive to mastering a foreign language. At last, the kind teaching method is not only limited by the age and the personality of students, but also puts forward higher requirements on teachers' own knowledge and ability as well as schools' facilities, which is difficult for ordinary schools to meet.

According to Lozanov (1978), the goal of short-term courses is to develop students' daily conversational ability. The main problem of students' learning is that it is hard for them to memorize, absorb and use vocabulary. Then, in the oral English class of junior high school, suggestopedia teaching method can maximize the improvement of students' conversational ability. If teachers can creatively use this means and combine different teaching methods to fully stimulate their learning potential and initiative of junior high school students, their competence of oral English expression will be enhanced deeply.

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