

# Teaching Vocabulary to Pre-Intermediate Students at Language-Oriented School Named Al-Khorazmiy through Suggestopedia

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**ABSTRACT:** This article describes an experiment in which, with the aid of Suggestopedia, pre-intermediate learners acquired new vocabulary. The article describes the nature of the experiment and presents interpretation of the experiment results by the researcher. Though this was a one-off experiment designed to give individual learners to acquire foreign language vocabulary without stress or anxiety, the second issue is that the format of the experiment itself provides an accessible model for similar experiments. Furthermore, it can be applicable to organize vocabulary classes by ESL teachers with the help of explanations in the theoretical part.

**KEYWORD:** Suggestopedia, suggestology, active session, passive session, elaboration, anti-suggestive barrier, affective barrier, learner anxiety.

## Introduction

In the ESL context, vocabulary is critical to support the four language skills. In the similar sense, most ESL teachers try to use effective strategies to improve vocabulary so that they can improve the other four skills of the English language. Most often, the students find vocabulary as a huge obstacle in language learning. Therefore, making use of other strategies to develop vocabulary teaching in foreign language is always important. Given this background, the researcher tries to investigate the effectiveness of Suggestopedia in teaching vocabulary in a practical environment.

The method of Suggestopedia was first developed by a Bulgarian psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov (1926–2012) in the 1960s. When he was working in a psychiatric clinic in Sofia, Lozanov witnessed that suggestions that he gave to his patients improved their health conditions resulting in him further investigating effectiveness of both verbal and non-verbal suggestions. His further investigations show that improvement in psycho-physiological condition can also improve brain functions, such as memory.

Therefore, Lozanov started a number of experiments in 1963 to investigate relationship between improvement in brain/mental condition with improvement in learning. During experiments at the State Suggestology Research Centre, the subjects were given verbal and non-verbal suggestive stimuli and the changes were quantified in their health and activity. The researchers used language to quantify the levels of memory during the experiments. The language material used was a list of

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words which were foreign words from common languages in Bulgaria and at the beginning of memorization subjects learnt 100 new words in one session increasing the number to 1000 in one session.

Suggestopedia was used not only in language teaching, but also in other subjects. For example, through suggestopedia researches were able to shorten the study hours without reducing educational effect in the experiments in 1970s (Lozanov, 1978, 2009).

Lozanov's brain model that he created to conceptually understand information-handling function of the brain can be summarized as follows:

1. The brain is inherently eager to learn and feel happiness when it learns.
2. The brain can naturally recognize all information at once now matter whether it is given to central or peripheral area consciousness. Also, it is natural for brain to retain information which it is given for a long time.
3. Two conceptual planes are the places where brain mental activities occur: (1) the conscious plane and (2) the paraconscious (not conscious) plane.<sup>6</sup> Both planes coexist in parallel and constantly exchange information with each other to support the entire activity in the brain. Conscious mental activity and reactivity require support from a large mass of information stored in the paraconscious area. Brain activities on the paraconscious level are more or less automatic, emotional and unlimited. When the brain is required to do intensive conscious mental activities without sufficient reserves of mind in the paraconscious area, the brain becomes frustrated.
4. Information given to one part of the brain will immediately be transmitted to other parts of the brain. Therefore, for example, the brain is not good at separating logic from emotion since it is good at association which, in turn, makes it impossible to stop information from spreading around the brain.
5. In general, to some extent, the brain likes changes and surprises. It does not like mechanical repetition or highly predictable linear consequences. At the same time, the brain likes a safe and consistent environment. In other words, the brain is naturally curious and creative when it does not feel threatened.
6. The brain tends to reflect multiple personalities many of which appear from time to time in many aspects of the life of a normal healthy person.
7. The brain as an information processor has an integrated structure of holographic and hierarchic functions. In such a structure, while each element of the brain can represent the whole brain system, it processes certain types of information in certain ways on demand from the integrated core personality.

Lozanov's brain function does not emphasizes localization in the brain, but it puts much importance on internal processes of the brain in relation to the world outside the brain.

Suggestopedia uses peripheral perception so that *an affective barrier* will not be triggered by the sudden impact of suggestion. During his observations, Lozanov concluded that the brain automatically records peripheral information that is processed in the edges of consciousness. Suggestopedia aims at using this ability of the brain. One of the techniques like that is "Concert session" which emerged as a result of memory session in Lozanov's initial experiment. In Concert sessions, learners are introduced 800 new words on the first day of the course, which is unusual in conventional classes. Therefore, the learners whose commonsense is still the old one will strengthen their *affective barrier* and refuses such a great body of vocabulary. On the other hand, in regard to

natural brain functioning, if each learner has enough language information learning will be much easier. As it is explained above, Suggestopedia places new information in peripheral context of the brain of a student who concentrates on listening to classical music and focuses on practical way in the course task when language information is recorded in a learner's brain in any case.

## Suggestopedia course structure

Typical suggestopedia classes involve "Introduction" in which the learners are introduced to the content of the target language, "Concert Sessions" to expose their brain to the language information peripherally, "Elaborations" to prioritize linguistic aims in the chapter and "Summary" as the final part requiring learners to do a creative task matching their level.

Table 1 Type of session and their duration in a typical intensive Suggestopedia language course

		Type of Session	Duration
First day of the course	Day 1 of the course	Introduction	35 to 45 minutes
		Active Concert Session	60 minutes
		Passive Concert Session	30 minutes
Teaching cycle for the rest of the course	Day 1 in the course book chapter	Elaboration	90 minutes
	Day 2 in the course book chapter	Elaboration	90 minutes
	Day 3 in the course book chapter	Elaboration	90 minutes
	Day 4 in the course book chapter	Elaboration	90 minutes
		Summary (as a part of Elaboration)	15 to 30 minutes
		Introduction	15 to 30 minutes
		Active Concert session	60 minutes
		Passive Concert session	30 minutes

Adopted from "*The Role of Semiosis and Affordance in the Suggestopedia Language Classroom*" by Kazuhiko Hagiwara.

## Concert Sessions

During Concert Sessions, the textbook is read by the teacher with already-selected background music (Lozanov & Gateva, 1988). These sessions introduce learners to a large amount of language information so as to store sufficient information before the subsequent stage Elaboration. These sessions consist of "Active" and "Passive" sessions. In active sessions, the teacher reads the textbook in harmony with the rhythm and melody of the music and music is often high dynamic chosen from Classical and Roman periods. Before starting the session, the teacher asks learners to follow the passage and translation as they listen to music. In order to promote blood circulation and reduce learner drowsiness, the teacher stops from time to time and invites learners to stand up and repeat the teacher's reading.

In the passive concert session, the teacher reads the text but in normal voice and music selected is often lively and cheerful, yet less dynamic. Furthermore, in passive concert session, the teacher does not ask anything from learners. However, passive concert session should immediately follow Active Concert session as “they are both sides of the whole” (Lozanov, 2009 152).

## Elaboration

In Elaboration, unlike conventional classes, learners are exposed to a different concept by the teacher when preparing tasks and they are taught four macro skills through activities in elaboration. Elaboration starts the following day of Sessions. In Elaboration, creativity is highly welcomed and learners take new perspective such as a new age, a new name and even a new gender. The schedule for the day’s task is also flexible. In summary, learners try a creative task that requires to use the content knowledge spontaneously. Possibly, summary can be incorporated as the part of Elaboration.

## Conclusion

This part is devoted to theoretical background in the topic. It explains why teaching vocabulary is important and why new strategies to teach it is necessary. It further explains the function of Suggestopedia method and how it is structured in language classrooms.

## Methodology

The population

The current research work is a study involving 20 pre-intermediate learners at language-oriented specialized boarding school. The researcher uses quasi-experimental method selecting participants among schoolchildren who she has already taught. Furthermore, a pre-test and post-test were used in order to find differences between students’ vocabulary acquisition through this method.

## Research instruments

It is often claimed that “the backbone of any survey study is the instrument used for collecting data” (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Therefore, the researcher opted to use pre-test and post-test to assess students’ performance in vocabulary acquisition.

## Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics		
	Pre-T	Post-t
Valid	20	20
Missing	0	0
Mean	129.200	909.350
Std. Deviation	30.891	49.840
Shapiro-Wilk	0.535	0.848
P-value of Shapiro-Wilk	< .001	0.005
Minimum	5.000	845.000
Maximum	150.000	992.000

The research includes 20 respondents and the table below illustrates pre- and post-test results. According to the table, students in conventional classes learnt around 150 words in one session with the most frequent count of 129, while in classes organized around Suggestopedia with Active and Passive sessions (where students creativity is activated through music in the sessions with two

different music types chosen by suggestopedia instructor), the learners were able to learn around 1000 words with average 909 in one session reducing class hours.

Independent variable here is the use of Suggestopedia method, specifically Active and Passive Class sessions. Dependent variable is learners' vocabulary learning level in one session. DV is at the same time continuous variable as its value is obtained by measuring and its numerical value can change between the highest and the lowest scores.

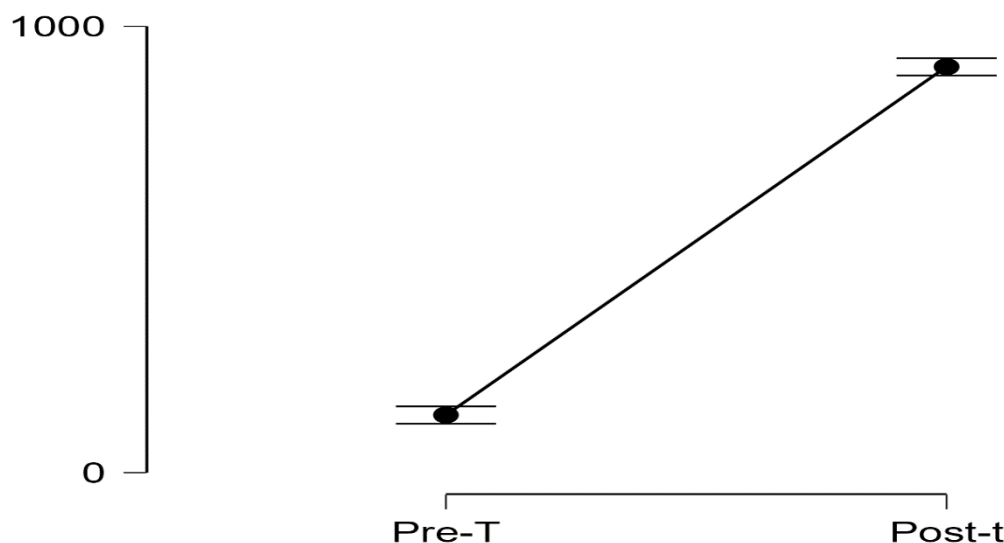
- 1) The assumptions for the paired sample t-test:
- 2) Is DV continuous-yes
- 3) Is data normally distributed-yes

Test of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)			W	p
Pre-T	-	Post-t	0.859	0.007

*Note.* Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

As the deviation is seen from normality, data is normally distributed.

#### Pre-T - Post-t



The mean is the post test is higher than that in pre-test and the differences are statistically significant. It means that the positive effect of Suggestopedia on vocabulary learning has been outstandingly high.

#### Conclusion

Since vocabulary plays a pivotal role in language learning and it is closely related to performances in four macro skills, developing strategies and investigating the use of them in enhancing the methodology of teaching it is always important. Among many potentially beneficial methods, Suggestopedia has been used to support vocabulary learning in language in local context.

The aim of this research was to find whether Suggestopedia method can affect positively on vocabulary learning among pre-intermediate students since most of the investigations on the positive use of Suggestopedia were done among adult learners. Since the research is limited to pre-

intermediate learners of language-oriented school, it is recommended to make further investigations on this side of the research. Research findings show that stimulating brain's activity through dynamism and emotion of the music, *anti-suggestive barrier* of learners can be easily removed as their focus shifts away from vocabulary into music lowering their anxiety in learning it.

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