



Enhancing Listening Skills for Iraqi EFL University Students with the Suggestopedia Method

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Abstract

It is undeniable that the majority of Iraqi students learning English as a second language struggle with listening comprehension, which is a major issue for them. The Problem of this paper consists in that a significant number of Iraqi university students exhibit noticeable weaknesses in English listening skills, which limits their ability to comprehend effectively and communicate efficiently. This is largely attributed to the reliance on traditional teaching methods that fail to account for individual differences or the psychological aspects of learning. The main objectives of this study are enhancing the listening comprehension level of Iraqi university students; employing the Suggestopedia method in teaching listening skill; examining the impact of a relaxed classroom environment on student motivation and comprehension. Moreover, this study aims to 1. Identify the concept of Suggestopedia, and its special techniques. 2. Specify teacher's role in Suggestopedia. 3. Examine the use of Suggestopedia to improve students' listening skill in English language. 4. doing a case study and survey the results to check the effectiveness of using Suggestopedia method.

This study adopted a quasi-experimental design. A sample of university students was selected and divided into two groups (experimental and control). The experimental group was taught using the Suggestopedia method, which included targeted activities, soft background music, and dialogue texts, while the control group received traditional instruction. Pre- and post-tests were administered to measure listening proficiency. This study arrives to the following conclusions: This paper ends with the following recommendations: 1. Integrating the Suggestopedia method into university listening curricula; 2. Providing teacher training on learner-centered instructional strategies; 3. Creating supportive classroom environments that reduce anxiety and encourage active participation.

Keywords: performance, comprehension, Suggestopedia, Traditional, Experimental.

Introduction

English as foreign language is widely used around the world in teaching and learning fields. Therefore, it is so important to being taught in the right way by an efficient teacher. Listening is the ability of receiving and interpreting messages in the communication process, it is the key to all effective communication, without the ability to listen effectively messages are easily misunderstood. Listening is a fundamental language skill, but foreign language teachers (Goh, 2002: 26) often ignore it.

Suggestopedia is a method of teaching a foreign language by which students learn quickly by being made to feel relaxed, interested and positive. It is one of the methods that can be used by teacher that suggests the limitations that students have to help them to believe that they could be successful in learning. Therefore, it can definitely cultivate students' motivation in learning. Moreover, it involves emotional meaning in given the lesson which help student's better in memorizing. So, suggestion is at the heart of Suggestopedia (Kharismawati, 2014: 2).

Moreover, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) is the term used to describe the study of English by non-native speakers in countries where English is not the dominant language (Widdowson, 1978: 62). This research focuses on Suggestopedia which is a teaching method that based on a modern understanding of how the human brain works and how it can improve student's listening skill. The significance of this method is to help students learn the things most effectively by including a rich sensory learning and positive expectation of success. Suggestopedia can be applied by using different range of methods; such as dramatized texts, music and active participation in songs and games. The distinct feature of this method is the use of music and musical rhythm, which considered more effective in teaching foreign language than the traditional methods.

Literture Review

Theoretical Background



Suggestopedia is an effective teaching method widely used mostly to learn foreign languages. This method had been developed by the Bulgarian psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov, where the theory applied the positive suggestion as effective features of target language learners, it used firstly by teachers in 1970s. It has focused more on desuggestive learning, whereas the common misconception is to link "suggestion" to "hypnosis". While in fact, it lies on the sense of offering or proposing with much emphasizing student choice. Lozanov presented the method to a commission in Paris at UNESCO, in 1978. After that UNESCO issued a final report in 1980 with positive and negative considerations (Lozanov, 1978: 127).

Suggestopedia in the term of pseudo-science depends on the trust that

Students develop towards the method; however, it can be compared to a placebo. Since the placebos are indeed effective, so it can consider as a fact that the students only receive input by listening, reading and musical-emotional backing, while the material factors are less affective on the process of language acquisition. In addition to that, there are many other factors, for example; the non-conscious acquisition of language or bringing the learner into a childlike state is doubted by critics (Ramirez, 1983: 12).

Moreover, what psychologists have found that Suggestopedia divided into four main branches; the first is still called Suggestopedia, it widely used in Eastern Europe, depending on different techniques from Lozanov's original version. While the other three are called: Super learning, Suggestive Accelerated Learning and Teaching (SALT), and Psychopädie. Super learning and SALT are used in North America, while Psychopädie was appeared in West Germany. Despite the fact that the four types are slightly different from the original.

Suggestopedia and from each other, but they still share the common traits of music, relaxation, and suggestion. So, the above four variants of Suggestopedia are too far from the original concept, and are based on the early experiments, which were left behind during the new improvements of the method. Especially, the theory and practice of the Liberating-stimulating Pedagogy on the Level of the Hidden Reserves of the Human Mind by Lozanov (Seel, 2011: 172).

Concept of Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is the most interesting method of teaching; because it gives learners the opportunity to learn through their own learning style, whether it is visual, auditory, or kinesthetic style. for example, visual style can be learned through seeing that and they need to see the teacher's body language and they can improve their speaking and listening skills through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through, and listening to what others have to say (Bancroft, 2005: 34).

Furthermore, Suggestopedia is easy to use by teachers; because it desuggests the limitations that students have to help them to believe that they could be successful in learning. On top of that, it can cultivate students' motivation in learning, because it involves emotional meaning in given the lesson, as a result students will be better in memorizing. However, some foreign language learners have difficulties in acquiring English as the second language because of the fear of the students of making a mistake that might poses a mental block in the learner's brain.

Suggestopedia means the combination of desuggestion and suggestion. Obviously lower the fear and motivate student's potential to learn. So the students should learn to understand and use the target language for Communication, and Suggestopedia will encourage him to use the new language in a real situation to improve his speaking and listening skills (Rustipa, 2011:17).

The Techniques of Suggestopedia

Classroom Set-up

In Suggestopedia method, one of teacher's challenges is to create a bright and cheerful environment in the classroom. This was applied in my case study, that the walls of the classroom were decorated with scenes from a country where the target language is spoken. However, this might be difficult sometimes, but it is so important because it provides a positive an environment as possible (Schiffler, 1992: 33).

Peripheral Learning

In fact, the students learn English not only from direct instruction but also from indirect instruction. This can be right through encouraging the students to present in such a perfect learning environment by



using posters and decoration featuring the target language and various grammatical information, and changed from time to time to suit the lesson, this method helps students to learn many things indirectly in the classroom or outside classroom. The teacher may or may not call attention to the posters. For example, students can produce simple sentence by using the posters or grammatical information on the wall (ibid,34).

Positive Suggestion

One of teacher's important responsibilities lies on orchestrate the Suggestive factors in a learning situation, in other words helping students break down the barriers and difficulties of learning that they have. Teacher can do that through direct and indirect means. Direct suggestion appeals to the students' consciousness by telling the students that they are going to be successful. But indirect suggestion appeals to the students' subconscious, is actually the more powerful of the two. It was achieved through the dialogue, "Be self-confident (Negrete, 2015: 19).

Choose a new identity

In this technique, students choose a target language name and a new Occupation that the students have a chance to develop a whole biography about their fictional selves, such as Role play, First concert, and Second concert.

- Role play:

Here the students are asked to present temporarily that they are someone else and to perform in the target language as if they were that person. They are often asked to create their own lines relevant to the situation.

-First concert (active concert):

The two concerts are components of the receptive phase of the lesson. In the first concert, the teacher reads the dialog in the target language.

e.g. Music is played.

After a few minutes, the teacher begins a slow, dramatic reading and Synchronized in intonation with the music.

- Second concert (passive concert):

In the second phase, the students are asked to put their script aside. They simply listen as the teacher reads the dialog at the normal rate of speed. The teacher is seated and reads with musical accompaniment. The content governs the way the teacher reads the script, not the music.

Primary Activation

This technique follows components of the active phase of the lesson. Students playfully reread the target language dialog aloud, as individuals or in-group. In the lesson we observed, three groups of students read parts of the dialog in a particular manner: the first group, sadly; the next, angrily; the last, cheerfully.

Creative Adaptation

In this technique, different activities will be depended to encourage students to learn the new material and use target language spontaneously. The activities include singing, dancing, dramatization and games. The important thing is that the activities are varied and do not allow the students to focus on the form of the linguistic message, just the communicative intent (Negrete: 24).

The Implementation of Suggestopedia Method in the Teaching and Learning Process

The implementation of Suggestopedia method in the teaching and learning process, have six key features; which are:

- Comfortable environment,
- the use of music,
- peripheral learning,
- free errors,
- homework is limited, and



-music, drama, and art are integrated in the teaching and learning process. The teaching and learning process of Suggestopedia method had a comfortable environment.

The chairs were arranged into semicircle facing the whiteboard so that the students can pay more attention to the teacher and would be more relaxed. The teacher also always asks for the students' condition whether they were comfortable enough or not in the day, they study English. There are many pictures on the wall that can support their teaching and learning process. Those pictures are there in the hope that when the students forget about something they can get it from the wall immediately (Lozanov, 2009: 48).

By using Suggestopedia method, the classroom is very different from common classrooms. In the classroom, the chairs are arranged semicircle and faced the white board in order to make the students pay more attention and get more relaxed. The teacher arranged the students' chair into semicircle to make the students feel more relax. The teacher used baroque music which is a classic music in the Suggestopedia teaching and learning process.

In the Suggestopedia method baroque music is used to make the students more relax. If the students are relaxed, their feeling of fear will be decreased and it can make the students easier to understand while studying English. The teacher asked the students to listen to the music and feel more relax. One of the most uniqueness of this method is the use of Baroque music during the learning process (Ostrander and Schroeder cited in retention of huge quantities of materials. In the Suggestopedia method, students were in a peripheral learning.

The students acquire English not only from direct instruction but also from indirect instruction. It is encouraged through the presence in the learning environment of posters and decoration featuring the target language and various grammatical information (Felix, 1989: 12).

Methodology

This section is devoted to describing and explaining the fundamental procedures that are essentially involved in the preparation and completion of the empirical part of the study. It gives some information about the nature of the study, which is an experimental, qualitative and quantitative one. It states what is meant by experimental, qualitative and quantitative research, how to conduct it, and what the main are and what are the most dominant characteristics of this kind of research, and the following procedures were followed:

- 1- Selecting 60 students as a sample of EFL students from Imam Al-Kadhim University College, 1st year students /English Language.
- 2- Dividing the selected sample of students randomly into two groups: An Experimental Group of 30 students and a Control Group of 30 students.
- 3- Designing a listening test and deciding the validity and reliability of the test.
- 4- Doing a pre-test to the selected sample of the study in order to measure the initial level of achievement in listening.
- 5- Teaching the experimental group students according to Suggestopedia method; whereas Teaching the control group students according to traditional techniques.
- 6- Post- testing both groups in listening at the end of the experiment, using suitable statistical to analyze the collected data.

The population of the study covers EFL 1st year students /Department of English Language at Imam Al-Kadhim University College/ Baghdad. The total number of participants is 60 students. The first thirty students were taught according to the traditional method whereas, the second group of thirty students was prepared for the test, and they received the test paper, and started to fill it. The test was administered to the group after employing suggestopidea method inside classroom. The scores in the test were arranged into tables, the test of the group design to use for the experiment. The answer of the test varies between true and false and multiple choices, the test used to know the students opinions about using suggestopidea to improve their listening skill. The following questions were identified.

Q.1. Was Suggestopedia method beneficial in improving your listening skill?

Q.2. Do you think that Suggestopedia method is more flexible and enjoyable than traditional methods?

Q.3. Does the using of Suggestopedia method achieve the purpose of learning and positive suggestion?

Q.4. Does Suggestopedia provide good opportunities to raise the level of the student?

Q.5. Have you consulted with the teachers on your listening problems inside the classroom?



- Q.6. Can you perform listening exercises without discussing in pair or group of majored classmates?
 Q.7. How much does it beneficial for you ?
 Q.8. What kind of benefits?
 Q.9. What Suggestopedia adds to lessons inside classroom?
 Q.10. Do you interested in Suggestopedia method or not?
 Q.11. How much do you evaluate your listening skill after using Suggestopedia?
 Q.12. How much can you understand English native speaker?

Details of the Activity

The above suggestive questions had been identified for testing the aims of the research which reflects the effect of Suggestopedia Method on Iraqi EFL university Student's Listening Skills, and whether this method of teaching is helpful or not, and whether the students prefer it or not.

Data analysis

Results

	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12
1.	yes	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	Sometimes	much	Learning benefit	Clearness	Yes	Improve	Very well
2.	yes	Yes, I think	Maybe	No	yes	yes	much	Learning benefit	Both	Yes	Improve	Very well
3.	yes	Yes, I think	No	yes	yes	yes	Somewhat benefit	Both	Flexibility	Yes	Improve	Very well
4.	no	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	No	yes	Somewhat benefit	Personal benefit	Flexibility	Yes	Improve	Not bad
5.	yes	Yes, I think	Yes	yes	yes	Sometimes	Less	Learning benefit	Both	Yes	Improve	Very well
6.	no	Yes, I think	Yes	yes	yes	Sometimes	Somewhat benefit	Both	Both	No	Same	Very well
7.	maybe	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	No	much	Both	Both	Yes	Improve	Very well
8.	yes	Yes, I think	No	yes	No	Sometimes	much	Both	Both	Yes	Improve	Not bad
9.	yes	Yes,	May	yes	yes	Som	muc	Bot	Bot		Imp	Not



		I think	be			etims	h	h	h		rov e	bad
10.	yes	Yes, I think	Yes	No	yes	No	So meh ow ben efit	Bot h	Bot h	Yes	Imp rove	Ver y wel l
11.	yes	Yes, I think	Yes	No	yes	yes	So meh ow ben efit	Bot h	Bot h	Yes	Imp rove	Not bad
12.	yes	Yes, I think	Yes	yes	No	yes	muc h	Per son al ben efit	Flex ibility	Yes	Imp rove	Not bad
13.	maybe	Yes, I think	May be	yes	No	yes	muc h	Bot h	Cle arn ess	Yes	Imp rove	Not bad
14.	yes	No, I don't think	May be	yes	yes	yes	Les s	Lea rnin g ben efit	Cle arn ess	No	Imp rove	Not bad
15.	yes	Yes, I think	No	yes	No	Som etims	Les s	Per son al ben efit	Flex ibility	Yes	Imp rove	Not bad
16.	no	Yes, I think	Yes	yes	No	yes	So meh ow ben efit	Lea rnin g ben efit	Cle arn ess	Yes	Imp rove	Not bad
17.	no	Yes, I think	Yes	No	yes	Som etims	So meh ow ben efit	Bot h	Cle arn ess	Yes	Imp rove	Ver y wel l
18.	yes	Yes, I think	No	Yes	yes	No	So meh ow ben efit	Bot h	Bot h	Yes	Imp rove	Ver y wel l
19.	yes	No, I don't think	May be	yes	No	Som etims	So meh ow ben efit	Lea rnin g ben efit	Bot h	No	Imp rove	Not bad
20.	yes	No, I don't	Yes	yes	yes	No	Les s	Bot h	Cle arn ess	Yes	Sam e	Not bad



		think										
21.	yes	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	No	much	Learning benefit	Both	No	Improve	Not bad
22.	no	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	yes	Somewhat benefit	Personal benefit	Both	No	Same	Very well
23.	yes	Yes, I think	No	yes	yes	yes	Less	Both	Clearness	Yes	Improve	Not bad
24.	yes	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	yes	much	Learning benefit	Clearness	Yes	Same	Not bad
25.	yes	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	Sometimes	Less	Both	Both	Yes	Same	Very well
26.	yes	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	No	yes	Somewhat benefit	Personal benefit	Both	No	Same	Very well
27.	no	Yes, I think	Maybe	yes	yes	yes	much	Learning benefit	Clearness	No	Same	Not bad
28.	yes	No, I don't think	No	No	yes	yes	Somewhat benefit	Both	Both	Yes	Improve	Not bad
29.	no	Yes, I think	Yes	yes	No	No	Somewhat benefit	Learning benefit	Clearness	No	Same	Very well
30.	yes	No, I don't think	Yes	No	yes	yes	Less	Learning benefit	Clearness	No	Same	Not bad

Discussions

Generally speaking, Suggestopedia method had a good impact on improving students' listening skills, because of many features such as positive suggestion, peripheral learning, and primary activation. As well as interaction between teacher and students, and between students themselves leads them to break the berry of shyness as a result they can speak in fluency. It confirmed that using



Suggestopedia method today is more effectiveness than the traditional methods of teaching. in this method, the teacher depends on the power of suggestion in learning, the notion being that positive suggestion would make the learner more receptive and, in turn, stimulate learning. Physical surroundings and atmosphere in classroom are the vital factors to make sure that "the students feel comfortable and confident", and various techniques, including art and music, are used by the trained teachers.

Teachers should not act in a directive way, although this method is Teacher-controlled and not student-controlled. For example, they should act as a real partner to the students, participating in the activities such as games and songs "naturally" and "genuinely." Although there are many techniques that the teachers use, factors such as "communication in the spirit of love, respect for man as a human being, the specific humanitarian way of applying their 'techniques'" etc. are crucial. The teachers not only need to know the techniques and to acquire the practical methodology completely, but also to fully understand the theory, because, if they implement those techniques without complete understanding, they will not be able to lead their learners to successful results, or they could even cause a negative impact on their learning. Therefore, the teacher has to be trained in a course taught by certified trainers.

Conclusions

The main conclusions of this study can be stated as followed: using of Suggestopedia in teaching English language is beneficial for both the learners and teachers of language, and improves students' ability in listening. The results revealed that the use of Suggestopedia method enhances students' listening skills in English language. The reason behind that is Suggestopedia method involves use of aesthetic galleries, musical sounds, and suggestions that help learners remove anxiety, emotion, and fear that might preoccupy them. Finally, The results revealed a significant improvement in the performance of the experimental group compared to the control group, both in terms of speed of comprehension and accuracy of responses, confirming the effectiveness of the Suggestopedia method in developing listening skills. Furthermore, it improves physical health and brings substantial benefits in personality and motivation.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that:

- 1- Language Pedagogy should be incorporated into the curriculum of English departments, Education Colleges and universities to allow student teachers benefit from latest methods used in teaching English language.
- 2- Integrating the Suggestopedia method into university listening curricula
- 3- Providing teacher training on learner-centered instructional strategies.
- 4- Creating supportive classroom environments that reduce anxiety and encourage active participation.

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