The Efficacy of Suggestopedia as an Art-Integrated Approach for Alleviating Stress and Academic Anxiety in English Learners

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ABSTRACT

Academic anxiety is a prevalent issue among students in modern times. In the present scenario the factors contributing to this rising academic anxiety, include high academic expectations, intense competition, a heavy workload, and fear of failure. Understanding and addressing academic anxiety is crucial for educators, parents, and policymakers to ensure students' well-being and success in today's demanding educational landscape. This descriptive research study throws light on the meaning and concept of the Suggestopedia pedagogy, which encompasses a fusion of different visual and performing arts mediums. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach in mitigating academic anxiety among English Language learners. Through an extensive review of related literature (2019-2023), the investigation culminates in the deduction that the integration of Suggestopedia Pedagogy yields advantageous outcomes in the alleviation of academic anxiety experienced by English language learners.

Keywords- Academic Anxiety, Suggestopedia Pedagogy, English Learners, Art-Integrated Pedagogy

1.0. INTRODUCTION

In today's educational context, academic anxiety has become increasingly prevalent among students due to various factors. These include heightened academic competition, high parental expectations, overwhelming curriculum demands, traditional teaching methods, the stress of examinations, and the pressure exerted by peers. The changing patterns of education and curriculum have contributed to the rise in academic anxiety among students. Defining the term academic anxiety, ("Understanding Academic Anxiety", n.d.)[1] states that anxiety serves as a signal from our body that there is a specific element in our surroundings that requires our focus and attention. It manifests through a sequence of chemical alterations in our brain and body, including an escalation in adrenaline (leading to a faster heartbeat) and a reduction in dopamine (a neurotransmitter that aids in pain suppression). These modifications induce a state of intensified attentiveness towards the underlying cause of the anxiety. Every academic pursuit has the capacity to induce varying degrees of anxiety among students. It is observed that certain students experience anxiety solely in relation to examinations or when confronted with specific tasks, whereas others encounter anxiety during the study of particular subjects that they dislike. According to Huberty (2012), academic anxiety can progressively worsen as a student's academic performance

declines, leading to an increase in anxiety levels associated with specific academic tasks (as cited in Hooda, M., & Saini, A. 2017) [2].

In our country, it is evident that English language learners frequently encounter academic anxiety when acquiring the English language. This is primarily due to the fact that many of these learners come from backgrounds where they have limited exposure to speaking or writing English, as it is typically utilized as a second language. As a result, they commonly experience feelings of worry, anxiety, and discomfort. In a newspaper report ("In up Board, over", 2020)[3] it was stated that out of the 26.67 lakh students who took the U.P board examination, 5.19 lakh students failed in the English paper. The report highlighted that many students prioritize science subjects over English, considering it to be a challenging subject. Learning English leads to feelings of anxiety, stress, and fear among students, and traditional teaching methods have not proven effective in addressing these issues. Similarly, according to data released by the Gujarat Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, 4.03 lakh students took the English (second language) examination, and out of those, 1.43 lakh students failed. R.H. Junakiya, the secretary of the board, pointed out two main reasons for the high failure rate. Firstly, the students lack a fundamental understanding of the English language. Secondly, a significant number of the students who failed come from rural areas, which lack the educational facilities and exposure to English available in cities ("1.4 lakh fail", 2018)[4].

The above-mentioned reports highlight that students' performance in the English subject is negatively affected by their limited understanding, lack of interest and exposure, and the presence of anxiety and fear. Consequently, it becomes crucial to address these issues by incorporating innovative and effective methods that cater to students' interests and alleviate their fear and anxiety. Among various effective English teaching approaches, one such method is Suggestopedia.

2.0. SUGGESTOPEDIA PEDAGOGY
Numerous constructive approaches are being utilized to address the challenges faced in teaching the English language, with a focus on reducing stress and anxiety among students. Suggestopedia is one such method that deserves exploration and experimentation in Indian classrooms. International research studies have demonstrated that, compared to traditional teaching methods, suggestopedia offers five times greater learning potential by effectively reducing fear and stress levels among English language students.

2.1. MEANING AND CONCEPT
The Suggestopedia method was propounded by Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian doctor and psychotherapist who emphasized the fact that learning is influenced by one's attitude rather than aptitude. Stevick (1976), states that Suggestopedia is a set of learning guidelines that stems from Suggestology, as described by Lozanov, which is a scientific study dedicated to the systematic investigation of non-rational and non-conscious influences that humans consistently react to (as cited in Richards and Rodgers. 1986, p. 142)[5]. Suggestopedia is a highly effective method that emphasizes comprehensible input and combines "desuggestion" and "suggestion" techniques to facilitate "super learning." At the heart of Suggestopedia lies the power of suggestion, which aims to activate and harness students' mental potential for enhanced learning motivation (Ivanova, G., & Severinova, D. 2021)[6]. Suggestopedia is an innovative language teaching approach that relies on the instructor's use of suggestions and clues while teaching English. Its roots lie in the field of psychology, with its primary focus on creating a learning environment for English language learners that is free from tension, stress, and anxiety. It also integrates art forms like music, drama, and visual arts. According to Gateva (1982 & 1991), Suggestopedia involves the application of classical arts and aesthetics throughout every phase of the teaching and learning journey (as cited in Mateva, G. 2018)[7]. This approach to language teaching possesses distinct characteristics that set it apart from other methods in the field. These key features contribute to its uniqueness and differentiate it from other language teaching methods. Suggestopedia includes the following key features as mentioned in Shikare, S. (2017)[8]-

a) Suggestopedia utilizes a comfortable and inviting learning environment.
b) The integration of Baroque Music is an essential component of the method.
c) It promotes peripheral learning and employs diverse instructional strategies.
d) Students are encouraged to freely make errors as part of the learning process.
e) The amount of homework assigned is kept minimal.
f) Suggestopedia incorporates music, drama, and other artistic forms into the teaching approach.

According to Lozanov (1982), Suggestopedia pedagogy is practised in classrooms mainly by adopting the following four main stages (as cited in Venkanna, K. 2015)[9]

a) Presentation: This preparatory stage of suggestopedia helps students relax and adopt a positive mindset, creating an atmosphere where learning feels effortless and enjoyable.

b) First Concert: During the first concert in Suggestopedia, the material to be learned is actively presented to the students. It is also referred to as "Active Concert"

c) Second Concert: In the second concert of suggestopedia, known as "Passive Review," students are encouraged to relax and listen to Baroque music while the text is softly read in the background. This creates an optimal mental state for effortless language acquisition.

d)Practice: During the practice stage in suggestopedia, games, puzzles, and other activities are employed to review and strengthen the learning process within the classroom.

Thus, it can be understood that Suggestopedia offers learners an active learning experience through a comfortable and relaxed approach, incorporating various forms of art and diverse instructional strategies. This combination ultimately creates a positive and favourable learning experience for the learners.

3.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To have a clear understanding of the literature available some of the studies related to suggestopedia were reviewed from the last five years i.e., 2019-23 as shown in Table 1

Table1 Shows the Reviewed Literature of Available Studies on Suggestopedia

Author	Title	Sample	Type of Research	Findings
Ivanova, G., & Severinova, D. (2021)[6]	The Role of Happiness in Applying Suggestopedia and Fostering the Language Learning Process	-	Descriptive	Combining Suggestopedia with methods such as Grammar-Translation or Content-Based Instruction boosts effectiveness and offers more help to learners.
Syarifuddin, M., Muhlisin, M., & Thinh, V. T. (2022)[10]	Suggestopedia-Based Language Learning to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills Viewed from Teachers' Educational Background	(75) Middle school students	Experimental	Research findings indicate that the implementation of Suggestopedia-based language learning resulted in an improvement in students' speaking skills.
Altun, M. (2023)[11]	Suggestopedia: A Relaxed and Immersive Language Learning Environment	-	Descriptive (Review)	By fostering a positive and supportive learning environment, Suggestopedia assists students in conquering their anxieties and developing confidence, leading to advancements in their listening and speaking abilities.
Sundari, E., et. al., (2021)[12]	The Use of Suggestopedia to Solve Students' Literacy Difficulties	(20) Seventh Grade Students	Experimental	The utilization of the Suggestopedia method resulted in a noticeable improvement in the capacity to compose descriptive text, as indicated by the findings.
Frasiska, W., Irhamni, B., & Azhari, M. I. (2021)[13]	Learn Reading Using Suggestopedia Method Through Webtoon Application	(20) University Students	Survey	According to all participants, the implementation of the suggestopedia method while reading English webtoons led to a notable enhancement in their reading skills and a simultaneous expansion of their vocabulary.

Astutik, Y. P. (2019)[14]	The Effect of Using Suggestopedia Among Students' Speaking Ability	(32) First semester students	Experimental	Based on the findings, it could be inferred that the utilization of the suggestopedia method is an effective approach for enhancing students' speaking proficiency.
Suyadi. (2021)[15]	Suggestopedia Method Effect on Reading Descriptive Text at A Senior High School	(60) Senior high-school students	Experimental	It was concluded that for senior high school students, the Suggestopedia method offers a more engaging and efficient learning experience.
Farhani, C. R. (2022)[16]	The Effects of Suggestopedia Method on Students' Vocabulary Mastery	(63) Class Tenth Students	Experimental	It was concluded that employing the Suggestopedia method has a notable impact on students' proficiency in vocabulary mastery.
Suprapto, & Kurniawan, R. (2020)[17]	Improving Indonesian Students' Rhetorical Skills Through Suggestopedia	(37) College level students	Descriptive	Data collected from the implementation of the suggestopedia method in learning revealed that 92.5% of the students achieved mastery learning, with 37 students scoring above 70.
Budianto, L., & Yuniar, R. F. (2023)[18]	The effect of Suggestopedia method on Indonesian EFL learners' reading achievement	(57)	Quasi-experimental	The results highlight a significant difference in reading achievement between the experimental group instructed with the Suggestopedia method and the control group taught using traditional methods. Students improved reading achievement by the Suggestopedia method
Bakhromova, A. (2022)[19]	Suggestopedia As an Important Method of Teaching Vocabulary	-	Descriptive	The study's findings indicate that the suggestopedia method has a significant positive impact on the vocabulary performance of primary learners.
Tay, M. S., & Uran, S. I. (2022)[20]	Suggestopedia Method to Improve Students' English Vocabulary Mastery in a Private Senior High School Within a Rural Context in Sikka Regency	(-) tenth graders	Action Research	Through the implementation of the Suggestopedia Method, student engagement in teaching and learning activities rises, resulting in increased levels of active participation, confidence, and enthusiasm towards English learning.

The studies reviewed in Table 1 consistently demonstrate that suggestopedia has a beneficial effect on enhancing students' performance in terms of speaking skills, mastering vocabulary, confidence, reading achievement, overcoming anxiety etc. Based on a comprehensive review of studies, it is evident that the suggestopedia method has a clear and positive impact on student learning, specifically in terms of improving English language skills. The evidence based on the above-reviewed studies indicates that the implementation of suggestopedia creates a favourable learning environment that encourages active student engagement, boosts confidence, and fosters enthusiasm. This method effectively enhances various language competencies, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additionally, it contributes to vocabulary expansion and the development of descriptive and expressive abilities. The consistent findings across the reviewed studies demonstrate that suggestopedia significantly enhances students' performance, leading to a more proficient mastery of English language skills in a stress-free learning environment.

4.0 CONCLUSION
Thus, it can be concluded that Suggestopedia pedagogy plays a significant role in reducing stress and tension in the learners. It is implemented in such a way that students remain relaxed in language-learning classrooms. Lozanov (1971) states that suggestopedia not only increases concentration but also reduces stress and anxiety (as

cited in Robinett, E. A. 1975)[21]. The core principles of the Suggestopedia approach suggest that it is important to provide an environment to the students which promotes stress-free learning. Muhammad, A. M. (2018)[22] states that Suggestopedia's fundamental principle asserts that when students' anxiety and negative perceptions are alleviated, their ability to learn becomes more effortless and rapid. Suggestopedia pedagogy helps in achieving such kind of learning. In this regard similar is the view of Zaid, M. A. (2014)[23] who states that by applying the principles of suggestopedia, language teachers essentially harness the natural laws that suggest that when people are relieved of stress and anxiety, they can learn more efficiently and effectively, with music serving as a facilitator of this process.

Finally, it can be stated that Suggestopedia as an art-integrated pedagogy proves to be a valuable approach for reducing stress, anxiety and tension in students. This teaching method aligns with the belief that when learners are free from anxiety and tension, they are better equipped to absorb and retain knowledge. By incorporating techniques like music, relaxation, art forms and a positive learning environment, Suggestopedia fosters a conducive atmosphere for students to learn with ease and comfort, ultimately contributing to a more effective and enjoyable learning experience.

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