

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2024.063.003](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2024.063.003)

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ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN MANAGING MULTI-LINGUAL ADULT STUDENTS IN A SUGGESTOPEDIA FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Abstract:

In today's globalized world teachers are faced with the challenge of managing multilingual students who carry all the specifics of their multicultural backgrounds and introduce the latter into the classroom. This article will view the challenged posed to teachers, such as language barriers (identification of dominant languages, communication difficulties), diverse learning styles (recognizing different learning preferences), and cultural sensitivity (addressing cultural differences, creating an inclusive learning environment). The teaching method of Suggestopedia-Desuggestopedia invented by Bulgarian scientist Dr. Georgi Lozanov in late 1960s successfully deals with those challenges. A summary of the principles of Suggestopedia, the roles of the teacher, the emphasis on positive atmosphere and the use of music will facilitate the understanding of the method. The focus of the article will be the strategies for managing multi-lingual students in a Suggestopedia classroom, namely language integration techniques (code-switching strategies, language games and activities), differentiated instruction (customizing lesson plans, providing varied learning materials), building a supportive community (encouraging peer collaboration, fostering a sense of belonging). The article will offer case studies with real-world examples of effective multi-lingual classroom management. There will be brief future considerations concerning the evolving pedagogical approaches, integration of technology and continuous research and innovation.

In conclusion, by remaining open to innovation and responsive to the evolving needs of students, educators can create a dynamic and effective language learning experience that maximizes the benefits of Suggestopedia in a multilingual setting.

Keywords:

Multicultural classroom, Suggestopedia, Multi-lingual students, Adult learners

JEL Classification: I29

Introduction

In today's diverse educational landscape, classrooms often consist of students with varying linguistic backgrounds. With the development of technologies and transcontinental travel the involvement of potential multi-lingual students is becoming a more and more distinctive trend. Managing multi-lingual students in a Suggestopedia-Desuggestopedia environment is crucial for several reasons. Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity are to be considered in the first place. Multi-lingual classrooms bring together students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Effectively managing these students ensures a respectful and inclusive learning environment that values and acknowledges their diverse perspectives. Secondly, optimizing the learning potential of multi-lingual students is ensured as Suggestopedia-Desuggestopedia relies on creating a positive and stress-free atmosphere by understanding their unique needs and their linguistic diversity to enhance the overall learning experience. Thirdly, a multi-lingual classroom requires enhanced communication between the teacher and learners. It allows for better understanding of individual linguistic strengths and challenges, thus facilitating tailored instructional strategies.

The article identifies several challenges, language barriers ranking first. Differences in language proficiency can impede communication and comprehension among students. Identifying the dominant languages within the classroom is essential for addressing these barriers effectively. On the other hand, adult multi-lingual learners have already developed their diverse learning styles meaning they may have varied learning preferences influenced by their cultural backgrounds. Another challenge appears to be cultural sensitivity. Cultural differences can impact how students engage with the learning process. Acknowledging and addressing these differences are vital for creating a harmonious and respectful learning environment.

Methodology

A brief review of Suggestopedia-Desuggestopedia will highlight some of its essential aspects. Further in the article the term Suggestopedia will be used to refer to Suggestopedia-Desuggestopedia. Suggestopedia is an innovative teaching methodology developed by Bulgarian psychologist Prof Dr Georgi Lozanov in the 1970s. This approach is grounded in the idea that learners can absorb information more effectively in a relaxed and positive environment tapping the hidden reserves of the human mind. Suggestopedia utilizes techniques such as music, visualization, and relaxation to create an atmosphere that promotes accelerated learning. The term "Suggestopedia" itself is a blending of "suggestion" and "pedagogy," highlighting the method's emphasis on the power of positive and non-manipulative suggestion in the learning process.

Suggestopedia is characterized by its holistic approach, incorporating various elements like language immersion, emotional engagement, non-verbal communication and involvement of peripheral perceptions to enhance the learning experience. It is often applied in foreign language education settings but can be adapted for various subjects. Suggestopedia is grounded in a set of Principles designed to create an optimal learning environment. Suggestopedia Key Principles include love and freedom. In addition to those come five more Conditions, namely (1) Conviction of the teacher, (2) Manifold increased study material volume, (3) Global – partial, partial – global, (4) The golden section, and (5) Use of classical art and aesthetics. These Principles and Conditions were later named the Seven Laws, and they shape the basis of Suggestopedic teaching and learning communication. *“They are so closely intertwined that they must also be simultaneously respected at all times during the teaching*

process", Lozanov G. The Seven Laws (Conditio Sine Qua Non) of Suggestopedia/Reservopedia. These Principles and Conditions contribute to the method's effectiveness in accelerating the learning process and promoting retention.

Suggestopedia places a significant emphasis on the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning. In this approach, the teacher is seen as a guide who creates a positive and supportive atmosphere for students. The teacher's role involves carefully planning and orchestrating activities, choosing appropriate materials (visual, audio, realia, etc.), and fostering a sense of security and trust within the classroom. The teacher is not merely a transmitter of information but a catalyst for the learners' engagement and absorption of knowledge.

Suggestopedia recognizes the impact of the learning environment on the effectiveness of the teaching process, thus the classroom setting is carefully designed to minimize stress and anxiety, promoting a sense of comfort and openness among students. Students are positioned in a circle so that everybody faces everybody and everybody has a visual access to all the classroom visual materials which impact their peripheral perceptions. This positive atmosphere encourages learners to be more receptive to new information, enhancing their ability to absorb and retain knowledge.

A distinctive feature of Suggestopedia is the incorporation of music to facilitate learning by creating a harmonious and pleasant ambiance, helping to reduce tension and anxiety. The balanced mix of activation of senses lead to relaxation and lack of fatigue. These elements are integrated into the learning process to enhance memory retention and promote a positive emotional connection to the material being studied. Suggestopedia often uses classical music, which is believed to contain the golden proportion. The latter equals 1.618 and is considered to be epitome of harmony.

Data

Challenges in a multi-lingual setting include language barriers, diverse learning styles and cultural sensitivity. One of the initial challenges in a multi-lingual setting is identifying the dominant languages spoken by the students to understand the linguistic landscape of the classroom. The identification process involves conducting language assessments, i.e. assessing students' language proficiency through informal discussions, written assignments, or standardized tests prior the course. Another challenge is communication difficulties arising when students with diverse language backgrounds encounter challenges in expressing themselves or understanding instructional content. In such cases the teachers should apply strategies such as implementing visual aids and non-verbal cues. Using visuals, gestures, and body language can aid comprehension. This helps multi-lingual students grasp concepts beyond language barriers. Another effective strategy will be encouraging peer collaboration. Creating opportunities for students to work in pairs or small groups allows them to support each other in understanding and expressing ideas. Peer collaboration fosters a sense of community and shared learning. Adapting common classroom language instruction ceates safety and comfort for multi-lingual learners as modifying language instruction to include simplified language, repetition, and reinforcement techniques ensures that content is accessible to students with varying language proficiencies.

Diverse learning styles in a multi-lingual classroom means that students often bring a variety of learning preferences influenced by their cultural backgrounds and individual differences. Recognizing these differences involves assessment. A Suggestopedia teacher will do observational assessments by carefully observing students' responses to different instructional approaches, activities, and materials, thus providing insights into their preferred learning

styles. On the other hand, multi-lingual students can be allowed to self-reflect on their preferred learning styles through surveys or self-assessment tools that can help identify individual preferences and strengths. Encouraging students to share their learning preferences and experiences fosters a collaborative learning environment where teachers can tailor their approach to meet diverse needs. The merits of Suggestopedia allow for tuning it to various learning styles. An excellent strategy for achieving this adaptation includes flexible lesson planning, i.e. designing lessons that incorporate multiple modalities, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements, ensures that students with different learning styles can engage with the material in ways that suit them best. Presumably, the flexible lesson planning will abide the suggestopedic learning cycle of the following stages: (1) Introduction, (2) Concert Sessions (active and passive), (3) Elaboration and (4) Production. In addition to varied learning styles varied learning materials have to be developed. The main learning material is the textbook called a libretto. It contains the plot of a story offering the new vocabulary and grammar to be taught in an intriguing and accessible manner. The text of the libretto in the target language is positioned in the left of the page and a translation in the mother-tongue of the learner is provided in the right. The challenge here is that a multi-lingual classroom requires translations of the libretto in as many languages as the nationalities of the students. The experience of Suggestopedia language centres in some Scandinavian countries, e.g. Sweden (National Centre of Suggestopedia, Restad Gård) and Norway (Directorate of Integration and Diversity, Oslo) is unique as they host sometimes students as many as twelve different nationalities in a classroom, thus they have to ensure twelve different translations, sometimes in rare languages. Another issue to consider is individualized attention to students without manifesting any favoritism at all to certain students. Offering personalized support and feedback allows educators to address the specific needs of each student, taking into account their learning styles and pace. Moreover, a Suggestopedia teacher is expected to create collaborative learning opportunities for peer collaboration, thus enabling students to learn from each other and demonstrate their diverse strengths, fostering a cooperative and inclusive learning environment.

Cultural Sensitivity is linked to cultural differences encompassing various aspects, such as language customs, traditions, religious beliefs and communication styles. Effectively addressing these differences involves cultural awareness training for educators, in the first place. The latter enables them to understand and appreciate the various cultural backgrounds represented in the classroom, and skilfully employ adequate approaches to tackling cultural issues during the lesson in order to maintain the positive and friendly atmosphere. This training can be conducted through workshops, seminars, or professional development programs. Another pivotal point is incorporating diverse perspectives in curriculum. Ensuring that the curriculum reflects a variety of cultural examples which belong to the students' cultural backgrounds helps them see their own experiences represented in the learning materials. This approach promotes inclusivity and validates the cultural diversity within the classroom. Additionally, encouraging open communication about cultural differences creates a supportive space for students to share their experiences and perspectives. However, a Suggestopedia teacher must be well prepared for both pre-planned and spontaneous cultural discussions and guide the discussions avoiding conflict topics.

The strategies for managing multi-lingual students in a Suggestopedia foreign language classroom include language integration techniques, differentiated instruction, and building a supportive community. Language integration techniques make use of a couple of effective approaches such as code-switching which involves alternating between two or more languages within a single conversation or learning context. In this respect, Suggestopedia teachers can strategically use students' native languages (if possible) when introducing new concepts or clarifying instructions, especially when there is a shared linguistic background

among the students. This helps bridge gaps in understanding and reinforces key concepts. However, as the course progresses the teacher aims at gradual reduction of native language use as students become more comfortable with the target language. A special focus is placed on language games as a language integration technique because these add an element of fun to the learning process while encouraging active participation and language practice, and helping students to forget about their psychological barriers. Suggestopedia educators can well employ an array of games, drills and exercises, such as word association games where connecting words in different languages that share similar meanings or sounds promotes vocabulary retention and linguistic flexibility. An excellent example is the so called international words. Another suggested exercise is a role-playing exercise. Creating scenarios where students assume roles and use the target language in real-life situations enhances communication skills and cultural understanding. Another practical technique is storytelling. Encouraging students to share stories from their cultural backgrounds in the target language promotes language skills and cultural exchange.

Differentiated instruction means several things. Customizing lesson plans to cater to the diverse needs of multi-lingual students is one aspect. Assessing the language proficiency levels of individual students helps educators tailor lesson plans to match their abilities. This ensures that content is neither too challenging nor too basic, allowing for an optimal learning experience. Next, incorporating varied instructional methods means that Suggestopedic educators recognize that students have different learning preferences, and respectively are able to incorporate a variety of instructional methods, such as visual aids, hands-on activities, discussions, or kinesthetic games to cater to diverse learning styles. Last but not least, is providing flexibility in pacing which accommodates differences in students' language acquisition rates. This ensures that no student feels left behind or overwhelmed.

Providing varied learning materials is another huge prerequisite. Offering a range of learning materials enhances accessibility and engagement for multi-lingual students. Traditionally, a textbook is the first aid associated with foreign language learning. With Suggestopedia as mentioned before textbooks are bilingual. Providing textbooks and learning resources (hand-outs, booklets, table games materials) in multiple languages, i.e. in the target language and the mother-tongues of the learners allows students to access information in a way that aligns with their language proficiency. Then come the audio-visual materials including videos, podcasts, and interactive presentations, which cater to different learning modalities and supports language comprehension. And here again, the emphasis on the culturally diverse content ensures that learning materials reflect a variety of cultural perspectives and examples, and fosters inclusivity and helps students relate to the content on a personal level.

Building a supportive community is mainly linked to encouraging peer collaboration and fostering a sense of belonging. This is easily achieved by introducing pair and group activities. Structuring activities that require collaboration among students encourages the exchange of language skills and cultural insights. Pairing students with different language backgrounds fosters an environment where they can learn from each other. This interactive approach supports language development through real-life communication. Peer tutoring is also practiced in a Suggestopedia classroom. Students who are more proficient in the target language assist their peers. However, peer tutoring is not explicitly imposed. The teacher inexplicitly uses peer tutoring by grouping the students for the purposes of different games and exercises. Peer tutoring not only enhances language skills but also builds a sense of camaraderie among students.

Fostering a sense of belonging is achieved by celebrating cultural diversity, in the first place. Recognizing and celebrating cultural events, holidays, and traditions from various backgrounds helps students feel valued and included. Another aspiration is establishing a classroom culture

where every student feels heard, respected, and supported contributes to a sense of belonging. This involves promoting open communication, active listening, and empathy. Using inclusive language and incorporating activities that reflect the diverse interests and experiences of students contribute to a welcoming atmosphere. This inclusivity extends to the selection of texts, examples, and classroom decorations.

Case Studies and Success Stories

A. Real-world Examples of Effective Multi-lingual Classroom Management

- **Case Study 1: Suggestopedia in a Multi-lingual class of adult learners.**
Context: A class of male and female immigrants of various nationalities in Sweden, taught at the National Centre of Suggestopedia, Restad Gård. The students have a basic level of proficiency in the target language, i.e. Swedish.
Approach: The Centre implemented Suggestopedia by incorporating code-switching strategies during the initial stages, gradually transitioning to a more immersive language experience.
Results: The use of code-switching facilitated comprehension and reduced language barriers. Over time, students became more comfortable with the target language, leading to improved communication skills and language acquisition.
Key Strategies: Identification of dominant languages to inform code-switching. Regular assessments to track language proficiency levels. Inclusion of culturally diverse learning materials. Inclusion of a number of kinesthetic games.
- **Case Study 2: Suggestopedia in a small class of adult learners.**
Context: A small class of Somali illiterate women taught at the Immigration Centre at the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, Oslo, Norway.
Approach: The Directorate embraced a holistic approach to Suggestopedia by incorporating cultural celebrations and peer collaboration activities. The acquisition of reading skills was incorporated in the holistic approach.
Results: The inclusive approach enhanced the sense of community and belonging among students. Language skills improved very fast as students engaged in collaborative activities that celebrated their regional cultural diversity. The female learners were able to read the target language of Norwegian within three months.
Key Strategies: Integration of cultural events into the curriculum. Encouragement of peer collaboration and tutoring.

B. Findings

- **Importance of Flexibility:** Successful implementations highlighted the need for educators to be flexible in adapting their teaching methods based on ongoing assessments of students' language proficiency and individual learning preferences.
- **Building a Supportive Community:** The creation of a supportive and inclusive learning community positively impacted the success of Suggestopedia. Educational institutions that prioritized community-building activities observed increased student engagement and a more positive attitude toward language learning.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Educators who engaged in continuous professional development, including workshops on multi-lingual classroom

management, were better equipped to address challenges and implement Suggestopedia effectively. Sharing best practices and staying updated on innovative strategies contributed to successful outcomes.

- **Incorporating Student Feedback:** Educational institutions that actively sought and incorporated feedback from students regarding their language learning experiences were able to refine and improve their Suggestopedia implementations. Student input played a crucial role in tailoring instructional strategies to better meet their needs.
- **Promoting Cultural Competence:** Recognizing the importance of cultural competence, successful implementations prioritized cultural awareness training for educators. This enhanced educators' ability to navigate cultural differences and create a more inclusive learning environment.

Future Considerations and Recommendations

Evolving pedagogical approaches include at least three aspects: incorporation of blended learning, implementation of project-based learning, and focus on social and emotional learning. As technology becomes more prevalent in education, combining traditional classroom instruction with online resources can offer a blended learning approach. This allows for flexibility, personalized learning experiences, and the integration of multimedia content to support language acquisition. Project-based learning engages students in real-world, collaborative projects that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Integrating this approach into Suggestopedia can provide multi-lingual students with opportunities to apply language skills in meaningful contexts, fostering deeper understanding and language proficiency. Recognizing the importance of social and emotional well-being in the learning process, future pedagogical approaches should incorporate Social and Emotional Learning components.

Integration of technology in a foreign language course can enhance language acquisition, provide additional resources, and facilitate communication. Integration of technology means usage of language learning apps, in the first place. These can cater to various proficiency levels. These apps can offer interactive exercises, games, and assessments tailored to individual student needs, providing additional practice outside the classroom. A huge resource proves to be online collaboration platforms. This allows students to interact with peers in a virtual space, promoting language use and cultural exchange beyond the confines of the physical classroom. In addition, teachers are encouraged to implement digital tools for language assessment to track students' progress more efficiently.

Continuous research and innovation is crucial for the ongoing success of managing multi-lingual students in a Suggestopedia classroom. It is recommended that teachers should engage in professional learning communities focused on multi-lingual education and Suggestopedia. Collaborative discussions and knowledge-sharing can lead to the development of effective strategies and best practices. As multi-lingual education will gain pace research on effective strategies for multi-lingual learning within the context of Suggestopedia is encouraged and recommended. A further step into innovation in Suggestopedia method will be exploration of cross-disciplinary approaches which means cross-disciplinary collaboration between language educators and experts from other fields, such as cognitive science and technology. This collaboration can lead to the development of innovative approaches that integrate the latest research findings and technological advancements.

Conclusion

The key strategies for effectively managing multi-lingual adult students in a Suggestopedia classroom focus on several aspects. Language integration techniques involve (1) code-switching strategies, i.e. thoughtful use of students' native languages to facilitate comprehension and create a bridge to the target language; (2) language games and activities, i.e. engaging in interactive activities that promote language practice and cultural exchange; (3) differentiated instruction, i.e. customizing lesson plans by tailoring instruction based on individual language proficiency levels and learning preferences; (4) providing varied learning materials, i.e. offering a diverse range of materials to accommodate different learning styles and cultural backgrounds; (5) building a supportive community, i.e. encouraging peer collaboration by fostering collaborative learning experiences that leverage the strengths of each student; (6) fostering a sense of belonging, i.e. creating an inclusive environment where students feel valued and connected to the learning community.

Throughout the exploration of challenges and strategies, a recurring theme has been the significance of flexibility and adaptability in the Suggestopedia approach. Emphasizing this aspect is crucial for several reasons:

- Individualized learning needs: Flexibility allows educators to cater to the individualized learning needs of multi-lingual students. Recognizing and responding to differences in language proficiency, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds requires adaptable teaching methods.
- Changing classroom dynamics: The dynamics of a multi-lingual classroom are dynamic and can change over time. Flexibility allows educators to adjust their strategies based on ongoing assessments, student feedback, and changes in the linguistic composition of the class.
- Continuous improvement: Adaptability is essential for continuous improvement in the teaching and learning process. It involves a willingness to experiment with new approaches, integrate feedback, and stay updated on the latest educational research and methodologies.
- Cultural sensitivity: Flexibility is especially critical when addressing cultural differences. It enables educators to navigate diverse cultural backgrounds, adjust instructional methods accordingly, and foster a culturally sensitive and inclusive learning environment.

In conclusion, embracing flexibility and adaptability in Suggestopedia not only addresses the challenges posed by managing multi-lingual adult students but also aligns with the core principles of the approach. By remaining open to innovation and responsive to the evolving needs of students, educators can create a dynamic and effective language learning experience that maximizes the benefits of Suggestopedia in a multi-lingual setting.

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