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Suggestopedic Mobile Language Learning

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Abstract: The use of suggestopedic teaching methods has been shown to be effective in the domain of language learning. Suggestopaedia is a classroom teaching method that employs certain strategies to enable learners to relax in order to enable more effective learning both consciously and subconsciously. The use of mobile technologies to support language learning has also become very useful and popular. This paper proposes the amalgamation of the two approaches to enable a mobile suggestopedic platform and demonstrates empirical evidence linked to the success of this approach on langue learning. The design of a Suggestopedic mobile language learning app is discussed together with different target groups of learners that can benefit from this type of teaching. Design, development and evaluation of this app forms our future work.

Keywords: Suggestopedia, Mobile Learning, Language Learning, App

Introduction

It has become increasingly popular for educationalists to employ the use of mobile computer-assisted and context-aware language learning technologies to enable students to learn foreign languages anytime and anywhere. Some of these applications employ sensors to enable the suggestion of location-relevant materials to students in order for them to learn in specific scenarios such as in a restaurant (food and drink vocabulary are displayed on the application to help the learner with ordering) (Kukulska-Hulme, 2016).

Suggestopedia is a classroom teaching method that employs certain strategies to enable learners to relax (such as using classical music) and aims to make learning more fun by means of jokes, games and songs (Lozanov, 2005). It is argued that the relaxing environment helps students to remove any psychological barriers and to ensure that they feel well emotionally but at the same time remain in a focused state, which is the optimum state for learning. Results have shown that this method can help learners retain much more information than other traditional methods, and Lozanov (2005) claims it accelerates learning by five times on average. UNESCO experts from different countries have argued that this method is a superior teaching method than traditional methods for many subjects and for many types of students (Lozanov, 2005). In this paper we examine how the two approaches may be combined to form a novel mobile suggestopedic platform.

The aim of the platform/app "Suggestopedic mobile language learning" is to provide a set of Suggestopedic teaching instruction, which can temporarily replace a Suggestopedic teacher. This means that learners can learn at anytime and anywhere they desire without the need to have

a presence of a teacher and be fixed to learn only at designated scheduled times in the designated classroom. This approach does not intend to eliminate the need to have a real teacher to provide the instructions, or the social interactions generated between the teacher as well as other learners. Instead, the app aims to be a supplementary tool to provide language learning. In section 2, we first provide a literature review on the different Suggestopedic teaching methods, followed some empirical evidence and findings that this approach has been successful, and lastly, a number of related mobile apps on language learning are presented. In section 3, a discussion of the design, development and evaluation of the app is presented. Finally, in section 4, we present our conclusions and future work.

Literature Review of Suggestopedic teaching methods/Mobile apps on language learning

Suggestopedia is a teaching technique originally proposed by the Bulgarian psychotherapist Lazanov in the 1970s (Lazanov, 2005). The general idea is that students should be placed in an environment where they feel comfortable and able to study effectively. In practice, this consists of the following four stages.
1. **Presentation –** students prepare to relax, adopting a positive mindset.
2. **First concert –** "Active concert" – the material to be learnt is first presented to the students.
3. **Second concert –** "Passive review" – the students are exposed to music whilst reading text quietly in the background – this brings them into an optimal mental state for assimilating the language they are learning.
4. **Practice –** Games, puzzles, and other reinforcement activities support the learning process.

An example scenario of suggestopedic learning taken from Mihăilă-Lică (2003) is as follows:
1. An introductory Largo baroque music piece (60 beats/min) helps the learner to relax (approx. 3 min).
2. Next, the learner listens to recorded flashcards**;** in the background of soothing baroque music.
3. Finally, a faster Allegretto baroque movement (120 beats/min) awakes the student from their half-sleep (3 min).

Additional techniques may include relaxation (muscular relaxation exercises carried out for 5 minutes at the beginning of the lesson) and direct verbal suggestion (e.g. "learning will be easy and fun for you today") (Venkanna and Glory, 2015). The method also takes into account the personalities of different learners and adapts learning content/methodology accordingly. Key elements of suggestopedia include (adapted from Venkanna and Glory (2015)):
- A rich sensory learning environment;
- A positive expectation of success;
- The use of a varied range of strategies;
- Background music, themed according to the lesson taught;
- Supplementary texts;
- The content in the textbook stimulating the learners' imaginations, supported (if needed) by further images, music, etc.;
- Music used to relax the students;

- Didactic pedagogy – the teacher provides all the required information.

Findings in the work of Venkanna & Glory (2015) show that the use of Suggestopedia could improve reading comprehension abilities at the ESL context effectively; the use of suggestopedia method in teaching reading comprehension can influence both students and teacher; and that students found the setting of the classroom and the teaching and learning activities enjoyable. It was suggested that the inclusion of innovative strategies such as Suggestopaedia should be included both in Pre and In-service teacher education programmes to enable them to achieve cognitive and affective development of learners as well as help the teachers to become classroom researchers by understanding the learners' needs and support for their language development. They also located a number of empirical studies, which showed that the use of Suggestopedia can give a significant increase of students' learning, such as in Djuhariah, Sada and Novita (2013), who report statistically significant increases in scores for reading comprehension. However, Suggestopedia is not without criticism, and Osman (2017) has analysed the factors – including sociocultural, psychological, and educational (such as learning styles) which may negatively affect the technique.

A number of applications were presented by Kukulska-Hulme (2016) which support the fact that mobile language learning applications being particularly helpful for refugees, unemployed young people not attending formal education or training, learners with disabilities, female learners with low levels of literacy and in disadvantaged communities, children learning in extremely large classroom settings in developing countries, in situations where there are shortages of (trained) teachers. For example, the MASELTOV project supports migrant learners by presenting rich resources and contextual recommendations on their phones to learn the local language in order to assist them with their social integration. This application includes a social forum, a translation tool, a cultural awareness game and a set of language lessons, among other services.

Design, development and evaluation of a Suggestopedic mobile language learning app

We propose a Suggestopedic mobile language learning app which creates an effective learning environment for learners based on the Suggestopedic approach and provides language instruction to learners. The first version of the app will aim to provide generalized instructions to all learners whereas the next versions after this will aim to provide more personalized instructions to each learner when the system successfully finds out their learning preferences. For the evaluation, we aim to test the application on different learners to examine the successfulness of this method as well as how and if using this app can enable learners to have better learning experiences and effectiveness whilst learning a language.

The different target groups of the app include the following:
1. Refugee and asylum seekers relocated to another country requiring learning a new language. Due to the effects of the reasons for the relocation, they may suffer from psychological stress and trauma, and therefore this method is particularly suiting to them as it intends to remove psychological barriers from the learner so that they can be in a more optimal state for learning.
2. Learners who may have fear of learning or taking tests or have any psychological barriers associated with learning, shyness, or speaking out in class can benefit from the Suggestopedic approach of learning as well as what the app can offer.
3. Learners who learn best with music or are kinesthetic will benefit from this method.

4. Learners who may not easily have access to a teacher due to financial means or physical barriers and so on can benefit from this teaching approach.
5. All other types of learners.

Conclusion and Future Work

Our Suggestopedic mobile language learning app aims to provide a novel and effective approach for learning a foreign language anywhere and at any time. It aims to remove learners' psychological barriers and to allow them to be in a more optimum/optimal state of learning. In our future work, we are designing, developing and evaluating this app in order to evaluate learners' learning experiences and effectiveness.

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