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SUGGESTOPEDIA, A SERIOUS COMPETITIVE GAME

Anca MAGIRU, Ionel MAGIRU

*School of Law and Public Administration, Constanta Spiru Haret University, 1Sabinelor Street, 900685, Constanta,
Romania*

E-mail: magiru_ion@hotmail.fr, magiru_ion@hotmail.com

Abstract: *The paper aims to show both how suggestopedia, a class game, can become a way of delivering advanced conversational competence quickly and how it can be used as a warm up activity. What makes this game interesting and attractive is that learning occurs through suggestion while the students are in a deeply relaxed state which is induced by music. The instructor should choose what kind of music he/she considers suitable for the topic which is introduced. Although the goal is understanding and not memorisation, the students are required to master prodigious vocabulary lists. This type of game implies initiatives, questions and answers, role play, listening exercises under deep relaxation.*

Keywords: *suggestion, relaxation, music, conversation, activities*

I. STATEMENT OF MEANING

Suggestopedia is a method of teaching, one of the strangest “humanistic approaches”, developed by Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian educator, in 1970s, [1] in which learning occurs through suggestion when students are in a deeply relaxed state induced by music. This type of activity supposes initiatives, listening exercises, role play, questions and answers. The materials should consist of still images/photos/postcards, music and texts with literary quality and interesting characters. [2]

II. SUGGESTOPEDIA, A SERIOUS COMPETITIVE GAME

What we are going to do is to offer a sample lesson plan, based on a Malorian text in order to prove how suggestopedia works like a way of learning, while being a challenge for the students to keep on doing other activities based on the chosen text. Suggestopedia is supposed to be a jumping-off point to stimulate the students’ curiosity and desire to read more, to go deeply into the topic.

Sample Lesson Plan

Level: advanced

Subject: The Death of King Arthur

Purpose: to create students’ interest in the language structure, content, characters, stylistic aspects of the fragment;

Episodes: they contain information on the death of King Arthur and the consequences of it;

Type: cultural information

2.1. Teaching Objectives:

O1: to help students to understand the language structure

O2: to create students interest in the content, plot and characters

O3: to introduce students into the Malorian style

O4: to make the students express their own feelings, opinions, attitudes regarding the topic under discussion

2.2. List of Suggested Tasks and Activities Using Suggestopedia and Other Serious Competitive Games

A. Pre-listening Activities

The instructor introduces the students the new subject and tells them that they are going to discuss a very interesting topic.

1.Materials: audio cassette of classic music composers - medieval era (1100-1425) [3]; still images and photos. [4] Group work to discuss tableaux representing gestures, spatial relationships, body language at a particular moment (e.g.: Sir Bedivere throwing the sword Excalibur into the lake, Arthur in the barge accompanied by many black-hooded fair ladies and their queen Morgan le Fay). When the music starts, the students are to walk round and look at the twelve postcards/pictures (representing medieval castles, churches, a lake, a sword, knights mounted and dismounted, armed and wounded, a barge, fair ladies). The instructor asks the students to choose mentally the postcard they like best, neither touching it, picking it up, nor telling the other students which one they have chosen. Once they have decided which they like best, they return to their places.

2.The instructor asks the students to close their eyes when the music starts and to keep them closed until the music stops. The instructor reassures them that they will not be touched by anyone during this time. All they need to do is to relax and listen to what the instructor says while the music plays. The instructor starts the music, softly in the background, and begins to describe the scene as follows:

“You are flying through the air, free as a bird, suddenly you see a hole in the clouds and decide to fly down through the hole, you land in the place you have chosen on your card.”

You are now in an English medieval castle, church, meadow, boat, lake, hermitage, etc.

“You look around, what do you see?”

“What’s the weather like?”

“What time of day is it?”

“You look round and see some people coming towards you, they stop and start speaking to you, you have a conversation. What are the people like?”

“What are they wearing?”

“Are they friendly?”

“You decide to do something together, where do you go?”

“Now it’s time to return, why do you have to leave?”

“How do you feel?”

“Say goodbye to the people you have met.” The instructor stops the music and the students open their eyes.

3.The students are asked to work in pairs and describe fully their experience to each other:

- a.the place itself (a meadow near a lake, a boat, a chapel, a castle, a church, a hermitage);
- b.the people (King Arthur, Sir Bedivere, the women from the Otherworldly stock, Morgan le Fay also belonging to this group of women, a hermit, other two knights);
- c.their conversation (they spoke about Arthur’s death, his leaving for Avalon, the Celtic paradise, the returning of the magic sword Excalibur to the lake, etc.);
- d.what they did together (they walked on the meadow, entered the chapel, met the Otherworldly women, watched Excalibur disappearing in the waters of the lake);
- e.how they felt about leaving (sad, amazed, happy, anxious, etc.).

Music plays softly in the background at this stage and the instructor monitors without interrupting.

4.In pairs, the students return to the cards and identify their partner’s choice.

This action allows time for detailed discussion and reflection on the significance of the text. It allows a great variety of forms of communication to represent group’s meanings beyond verbal forms. It develops iconic creativity and response. The students are asked to read the text which is the account of King Arthur’s death after his last great battle. [5]

B. Language Structure and Suggested Activities

This part is meant to help the students see the pattern of the language beneath the literary surface and thereby improve their language skills. The text is used as an opportunity for the students to express themselves in clear, effective English. The following are suggested activities:

1. Translate the text into Romanian. List down the unknown words and look them up. You might have noticed the archaic vocabulary and grammar forms in the text. Pick them out and replace modern English equivalents for such words. See lines (12; 16-17; 23; 25-30; 51; 54; 56; 58; 69;75)

2. Explain in your own words: a. "Your commandment shall be done" (6); b. "I saw nothing but waves and winds".(15) c. "I saw nothing but waters wap and waves wan"(24); d. "But now go again lightly".(28) e. "I dread me I have tarried over long."(40-41) f. "...in me is no trust for me to trust in".(57)

3. Turn the fragment into the Indirect Speech.

4. Compress the text into a number of sequences and write a summary of it.

5. Describe the setting, i.e. the time and place within which the scene is enacted. Consider carefully lines 33-41.

6. Imagine yourself as Sir Bedivere or King Arthur and describe your actions and thoughts in two paragraphs.

7. Consider lines 41-46 carefully. Write down the thoughts that may have crossed Bedivere's mind.

8. Imagine a story about the fair ladies in the barge and write it. You may use either the First Person Narrative or the Omniscient Point of View.

C. Content, Purpose, Characters and Suggested Activities

This part contains notes on Thomas Malory and relevant facts about the background which contributed to shape the literary work. Practice is provided to increase the students' awareness of the literary fragment as part of an author's creative universe. The exercises at this level are also meant to reveal the content and purpose of the literary fragment, the relationship between characters and their involvement in the plot. This approach helps the students place the text within its literary and socio-historical context. The information provided is brief and to the point, while the exercises introduce the students to the author and his time with reference to the text.[6] The following suggested activities, at this level, are meant to increase students awareness of the fragment as part of Thomas Malory's creative universe:

1. Because you are reading an excerpt and not the complete work, do you think it necessary to know the historical background of a text like that? If you do, write a paragraph on *A Page of English History in Thomas Malory's The Morte Darthur* using the information in the previous section. Use your own words as much as possible.

2. King Arthur is the main character in this novel. Detail his part in this section.

3. Find references in Arthur's speech to past moments and actions which prove that he had been highly thought of by the Knights of the Round Table. See lines 40; 47; 56-59.

4. What do you learn about the character of Arthur from Sir Bedivere's last decision, words and attitude? See lines 75-76; 78-80. Write a paragraph about it.

5. The *commandment* section shows how ritual plays an important part in the fragment. See lines 9-38. Select from this passage the lines that best reveal Bedivere's thoughts and actions. Follow the outline: a. Bedivere pretends that he has done what Arthur asked him to do. See lines 15; 24. b. He thinks that by hiding the sword and lying to Arthur he can keep the sword. See lines 9-10. c. Arthur refers to him as "traitor unto me and untrue", and says, "now hast you betrayed me twice!" See lines 25-32.

6. What do you learn about the character of Sir Bedivere from this passage? Write one paragraph about him.

7. Consider lines 39-80 carefully. a. How many people are present in the scene? b. Can you describe them? Try to draw the group in section 47-49.

8. Make sure of the good understanding of the relationship between the characters and their implication in the scene. How many people are there? How many women? How many men? See lines 6; 48; 67.

9. What do we learn about Sir Bedivere's feelings for King Arthur? See lines 61-62; 76; 78-80.

10. Comment on King Arthur's attitude in the concluding section. See lines 56-59.

11. Comment on the title of the novel in terms of relevance to: a. the plot of the novel; b. the theme of the novel; c. the author's attitude to his hero.

12. Does the kind of society that Malory describes bear any relation to the realities in his country? Turn the text into contemporary prose. You may try and write a newspaper article on it.

D. The Stylistic Level and Suggested Activities

This part explores the stylistic level of the text and the range of exercises gradually get the students through the practices of narratology and stylistics. The part provides practice that will eventually lead the students to the microstructure constituents of a literary piece. The students will deal with key words which point to the recurrence of a certain theme or motif, with figurative language, range of imagery, use of symbol, allusion, atmosphere. Suggested activities:

1. Most of the text is written in a dialogue form that catches the rhythms of the human speaking voice. Comment on the stylistic advantages of the dialogue in terms of: a. verisimilitude; b. dynamism; c. character drawing.

2. Here we have highly elaborate complex sentences, tension creating techniques, a wide range of imagery from visual to auditory and kinesthetic (i.e. sensory experience derived by bodily movements and tensions). The whole scene represents a point of high dramatic tension in the structure of the story. See lines 42-46.

3. Note the structure of the excerpt and try to divide it into logical units as follows: a. Arthur's wish (1-5); b. Bedivere's act of treason (6-24); c. the reaction of Arthur (25-32); d. desire fulfilled (33-38); e. Arthur's departure (34-59); f. Bedivere's sorrow (60-68); g. Bedivere's new life (68-80). Compare section *a* to section *d* and comment on the change in Sir Bedivere's attitude. You should remark the archaic use of the verbal forms with the ending *st* for the second person and the ceremonious way of addressing. See lines 1-5; 33-38.

4. Look for key words and phrases such as: *sword* (2), *waters* (24), *barge* (44), "*pray for my soul*" (59). Discuss how they help to build up a new attitude towards Arthur's wish. Write a paragraph on Bedivere's disobedience towards Arthur.

5. Examine carefully Malory's text from the point of view of realistic setting, ritual and legend. See lines 7-14; 33-38; 42-46. a. See how Bedivere's disobedience leads to ritualistic situations (33-38). b. Comment on the way this makes Sir Bedivere believe magic and its power. c. The word *sword* is obviously a key one in the stylistic fabric of Arthur's speech. See how often the word occurs and how it acquires greater significance. In myth and legend, the weapon with which the hero fights is an image of his own, symbolizing his force and character. Arthur's sword comes from the mysterious land of the fantastic, from the lake, this great unconscious power. It is a magic sword; Arthur, feeling that he is going to pass away, wants to return the sword to the Lady of the Lake. Write a comment on it. d. In the same way, the intensive plural, *waters*, is a key word. Comment upon its relationship to the scene related, water as a magic surface and a bridge between this world and the Otherworld.

6. Analyse the language employed by Arthur and Sir Bedivere. a. Arthur addresses Sir Bedivere in terms of great politeness and sincerity because he has been a reliable knight to him. b. Sir Bedivere speaks very kindly using a ceremonious language. c. Finding out that he had been lied to, Arthur addressed angrily to Sir Bedivere. d. After Sir Bedivere had fulfilled Arthur's wish, the King spoke politely to him again. e. They take leave and both look very unhappy.

7. The last chapter in which Arthur passes away by going into the barge with many fair ladies making for the Avalon, reveals Malory's unsurpassed art of resorting to symbolic imagery in order to create an atmosphere of highly poetic sensitiveness. Sir Bedivere could not believe that his king would die so soon until he saw the barge on the lake. See line 44. a. You should notice that the characters first become aware of this world surroundings; then of the water, standing for the bridge between the worlds and finally, the spiritual world embodied in the hermit and his hermitage. b. How does the lake

suggest the implacability of the indomitable fate? Find a section in the text relevant in this respect. See lines 42-62. Write your comment on it. c.How does colour suggest the idea of a ritualistic death in which the fair ladies, the nature, the lake, the barge were sharing the task of capturing Arthur? d.How is the impressiveness of the moment enhanced by the suggestion of sadness of the fair ladies? Comment on the graphical image suggested by the sonorous and visual imagery contained in 42-49. e.It is against that universal ominous motionless that Sir Bedivere becomes aware of the ladies' intention and of the significance of the little barge. Find evidence in the text of Malory's mastery of the art of gradation. See lines 42-49.

8.Pick out lexical elements that contribute to create a mournful atmosphere. See lines 43-46. a.Notice how the scene is expanded by the presence of many fair ladies. Who are they? Who is their queen? Where do they come from? What is your reaction to the epithet *black* describing the ladies' hoods? b.Find evidence in the text to sustain the mournful atmosphere. See lines 45-46; 66; 73-76. Make a list of verbs and nouns suggesting sadness and mourning. c.Notice the cumulative repetition of the word *waters* and write down your response to this image. d.Comment on the effect of Sir Bedivere's words. See lines 78-80. e.Pick out words connected to the Otherworld and to the spiritual world.

9.Make up a paragraph detailing the three realms where action takes place in this fragment: 1.the real world; 2.the lake which is the link between the real world and Avalon, the Celtic paradise; 3.the spiritual world represented by the hermit and his hermitage, the chapel, the grave.

10.If we define a *literary symbol* as a word or phrase that has a range of reference beyond itself, would you agree that *waters* has acquired the status of a symbol in the text? If you do, give instances to support this statement. Do you consider *waters*: a. a bridge between our world and the Otherworld? The image of any beginning and any ending, of life and death? Myths say that leaving this world our souls travel by sea towards the realm of shadows. b.You can think of it as the symbol of life, of feminine instability, as water and its waves are opposed to rock, the symbol of stability, of yang, the Chinese masculine principle. c.It can be the symbol of human soul with its passions and sins. d.It means coming back to nature, to what is womanhood; it means returning to genuine sources of happiness and safety. e.With Carl Gustav Jung, *water* is the symbol of the unconscious, with all its traps: mermaids and their tempting songs. f.It is one of the four essential elements out of which the universe was created in keeping with cosmogonical myths; it is a universal link, and at the same time an element which separates and destroys everything.

11.Thomas Malory builds up his three realms with an unsurpassed ability in the art of gradation. In line 3, the key descriptive element is cumulated and it is in the very middle of this symbol, *water*, that we saw Excalibur disappearing and King Arthur passing away to Avalon. See lines 36-38; 43-48.

12.Notice the change from the descriptive to the tragic. See lines 60-80; the author reaches the climax of the tragedy in the concluding paragraph.

13.The Point of View or Narrative Technique establishes the relation between the author and the narrator in narrative prose. a.Who is the narrator in this section of the novel? b.Is he a participant in or an observer of the scene? c.Can you distinguish the *reporting* sequences from the *commenting* ones? d.Is there a clear cut distinction between the two?

14.Behind the narrative there is always the author's Moral Point of View, i.e. his personal statement on life's major problems which he makes by writing his work. Such a statement involves a moral judgement and a writer is estimated by. a.What is Malory's moral point of view as expressed in the fragment? b.What is your estimation of it?

Final Activity

The instructor asks the students to gather all the information and impressions on the fragment and to write an essay on *Thomas Malory's Art of Creating an Atmosphere* in this excerpt from *The Morte Darthur*; or you can write a paragraph on *The Quest of the Self In Avalon*; or a composition which can begin like this: *The Healing of the King's Wound Stands for the Spiritual Healing of His Kingdom.*

III. CONCLUSIONS

We consider that the Malorian text can help students use Suggestopedia as a stimulating basis for improving their language proficiency by analysing the language structure underlying the literary expression.[7] The students will also be in a position to estimate how much salient points as plot, setting, time, character, or narrative technique contribute to create the macrostructure constituents of a literary text. [8]

The success of this approach in teaching Malory's texts to students of English and French is vitally dependent on its being properly organized as Suggestopedia must maintain a passive state among the students and also allow the materials to work on them rather than vice-versa. The instructors should create situations in which the students are most suggestible and present materials in a way most likely to encourage positive reception and retention. Suggestopedia, from the psychological point of view, fits perfectly to students who are good language learners, who like being with people and enjoy variety and change, love playing games and working in groups, like reading, role play and drama, are very sensitive to criticism and need individual feedback and prefer speaking to writing, who are interested in talking about emotions and personal topics.[9] We conclude that Suggestopedia, as a warm up activity, can make students more interested in studying successfully literary texts. Therefore, we, as ones who have experienced it many times, recommend it wholeheartedly, to the colleagues interested, as a serious competitive class game.

References

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