

**SUGGESTING LOZANOV:
SUGGESTOPEDIA AND CREATIVE WRITING
AT A HIGH SCHOOL IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**

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A mind once stretched by a new idea can never go back to its original dimension.

- Oliver Wendell Holm (1809-1894)

Declaration

This study represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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Charles Kusner

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Abstract

Suggestopedia (also sometimes referred to as “Accelerated Learning”) is a teaching methodology that claims to remove barriers to learning rather than teach students how to learn. Developed by Bulgarian psychotherapist and medical doctor Georgi Lozanov (1926-), it utilizes a detailed, three-phase cycle of teaching in which about 75% of teaching time is devoted to “Activations”, games and activities in which students rehearse material previously presented in unique “Concert Sessions” (which make up the other 25% of contact time).

Suggestopedia highlights factors often forgotten in the classroom: the design of an “optimum” learning environment, high expectations of success from the teacher, the use of music and art, the importance of enjoying the learning process, and the fostering of an atmosphere of “relaxed alertness”. The method has been used with some success, particularly in the teaching of foreign languages.

Ostensibly based on the way we learn naturally, Suggestopedia has developed a number of incarnations, in some cases because Lozanov’s work was not freely available in the West during the Cold War.

This dissertation outlines the salient features of both Suggestopedia and some of its incarnations. Additionally, it suggests ways in which the method may be utilized in the high school English classroom in South Africa. In particular, it describes an intervention in which elements of Suggestopedia were used to teach creative writing in a multilingual environment.

In short, this intervention involved the creation of a traditional two page creative “essay” inspired by, *inter alia*, the teacher’s high expectations, the meditative atmosphere created by music, and the posters in the students’ peripheral vision. A total of 158 Grade 9 and Grade 11 (mainly isiZulu speaking) students in an “ex-model C” school wrote, edited, and submitted such essays, the main criterion of success being whether each essay was deemed by the teacher to be of a sufficiently high standard to be reproduced here.

The project, based on a qualitative research design using the process approach to writing and a Suggestopedic-based pedagogy, elicited many engaging pieces of writing from students. The spirit of their writing as well as the writers’ own comments about the process will hopefully suggest the genius and versatility of the Lozanov methodology.

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Introduction- Why Suggestopedia?

Our first task, when we came down to the sea and reached our ship, was to run her into the good salt water and put the mast and sails on board.

-Homer (c. 750 B.C.)

Artists in various fields are always the first to discover how to enable one medium or to release the power of another.

-Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

They can because they think they can.

-Virgil (70 B.C. - 19 B.C.)

1.1 The Flavour of Suggestopedia

Describing pedagogical trends from the 1970s, Zemke (1995, 1) terms Georgi Lozanov's Suggestopedia "...one of the more curious survivors of that era":

Some have stood the test of time and become downright respectable: training by computer, the systems approach, the videocassette, andragogy, learner-centered instruction and distance learning come quickly to mind. Others, like transactional analysis, 16 mm film, and behavior modification, have gone the way of long sideburns, sitar music, and purple dress shirts.

Lozanov's detailed, three-phase cycle of teaching is perhaps most well known for its use of baroque music during the learning process. To show that it is so much more than that, I invite you to consider the following two examples of the flavour of Suggestopedia:

An ex-student wrote the following as part of an article for her school magazine:

The Beasts and the Beasties

School. It's a fascinating place. Many important "Life Lessons" occur here from basic interaction with the opposite sex (as soon as one realizes there is such a thing) to basic survival skills (the older the other kid, the more one bleeds), all the way through to politics.

I'm referring to Student Politics, or is it Educational Politics? Who cares? My point is that school is potentially the best place to learn about and deal with power relationships. I ask: who better to demonstrate and set examples of these relationships? Why yes! Teachers!

Thankfully, there is a secret underworld of the student body. It contains a network of information which is passed by word of mouth to the young via the old...it regards all the necessary statistics of the faculty. This includes cruel imitations of all the Beasties (nasal twangs, twitches, a record of bad breath, B.O., hangovers or any other unbecoming characteristics) and songs of praise for the Beaus (the sweetest song of praise being consistent hard work and excellent behaviour in a Beaut's class). Sadly, it is often the case that the Beaus can only be counted on one hand.

But what makes a teacher a Beastie or a Beaut?

A Beastie has a bare classroom.

A Beaut has a classroom that is bright and exciting to enter.

A Beastie instructs his/her pupils to be quiet while they are still entering the room.

A Beaut will wait calmly (thus calming the class), greet the class, offer them a seat, and may then expect 100% in return.

A Beastie will compete with pupils over who is more stressed.

A Beaut will never complain but merely listen, for a Beaut understands that problems vary for people: what is suffered daily by some may be a catastrophe for others.

A Beastie is always highly strung.

A Beaut never lets on.

A Beastie's lungs are constantly exercised.

A Beaut never shouts.

A Beastie always criticizes.

A Beaut will congratulate pupils for just being the awesome individuals they are...

-Combes (2000, 46)

The second example is from Hagiwara's (1993, 7) article "Invitation to Suggestopedia" and describes the first day of an "...ideal intensive Japanese course taught with Suggestopedia":

Scene 1: First Day Introduction

In the morning, twelve students were waiting in the classroom for their teacher. They had never studied Japanese before, and this first lesson was also the first time for them to meet one another. They felt a little excited and tense as they waited for the lesson to begin. They had some expectations about what would happen because they had already received information on how the method would work. The best possible environment that the teacher could prepare had been created in the classroom - a quiet room...full of light and fresh air and Japanese art, and tourism posters on the wall, plants in the corner, and chairs arranged in a semi-circle.

"*Ohayo gozimasu!*" The teacher came in with a big bag. He started saying something in Japanese as if he naturally believed that the students would understand him. As he talked, he started to show the students the things he had in his big bag. First, he pulled out a puppet which he introduced as "Kintaro", one of his good friends. The teacher kept talking as one thing after another came out of his big travel bag, things he called: *kamera, pen, pasupooto, booru, wain, biiru*, and so on. The students began to relax as

they found they could understand what the teacher was saying. Besides, he looked so happy and cheerful that the students began to feel the same way...

...The students could clearly guess what the teacher was trying to say from the gestures and facial expressions he was making and from the real things with familiar names he was showing them...The students were getting an initial idea of Japanese grammatical structures as well as of the names of things. The teacher sometimes asked the students what things were, but he didn't seem to expect that they would reply. When he asked questions, he looked vaguely round the classroom, never pointing to a particular student. However, some students spontaneously began to guess the names of things, saying "*Telephone desu.*" Then the teacher took that word and said in Japanese: "Close! You've just missed. *DENWA desu.* Yes, *kore wa denwa desu.* But wait. Oh, you speak Japanese! How nice!"

While Jessica's article does not even mention Suggestopedia, the "Beaut" teacher sounds to me very much like the Suggestopedic teacher. I can recognise my own classroom as that of a "Beaut", and I know how much Lozanov has influenced my pedagogical décor. Both quotations emphasize the classroom environment: inviting and somehow both tranquil and stimulating.

And while the description of the Japanese lesson makes no mention of music (baroque or otherwise), something of the teacher's charismatic style does emerge clearly. The most interesting words for me in this quotation are "...as if he naturally believed that the students would understand him". The aim of such an attitude is to suggest to students that learning is easy and pleasurable and to teachers that their expectations are themselves an important predictor of student success.

Is Suggestopedia, then, more than just a methodology but also somehow an attitude? A personality? I decided in the end to call it a "methodology" in this dissertation because it provides such detailed guidelines: Suggestopedia shows the teacher exactly how to arrange the learning experience and environment to facilitate maximum brain participation. Lozanov, a Bulgarian medical doctor and psychotherapist, claims (2003a, 1):

Suggestopedia is not a technique. It is a new approach, a new type of communication – a communication at the potential level, a new philosophy of learning and education... Suggestopedia derives its name not from suppressing methods of influence upon personality but from its integral system for liberation from preliminary negative concepts regarding the difficulties in the process of

learning that have originated during one's lifetime. Therefore, Suggestopedia is a system for liberation...

Lozanov (1978a, 322; 2003b, 1) makes six broad claims:

- On average, four times more material can be taught and assimilated in Suggestopedic teaching as opposed to other teaching methods. In a basic Suggestopedic foreign language course, about 2000 words are taught in 96 teaching hours.
- Functional use and retention of this material are very high.
- Inner freedom
- Increasing the motivation for learning
- Joyful learning
- Psycho-physiological well-being

What does Suggestopedia offer to me and my mainly Zulu first-language students in an “ex-model C” high school in new millennium Durban-South? As aeroplanes pass noisily overhead and trucks hoot on Edwin Swales Drive alongside, is a little Vivaldi in the background, together with posters and a smiling teacher, actually going to make any difference? Is Suggestopedia “...nothing more than an oversold package of pseudoscientific gobbledygook” (Scovel, 1979, 260)? Or does Lozanov's method really enhance the learning environment and motivation levels of both teacher and students? If so, can I convince the reader that this “curious” 1970s relic, like long sideburns and purple dress shirts, still has a place in the new millennium?

How, in particular, can I adapt Suggestopedia to produce riveting student “prose compositions”? The next section will defend my choice of this genre in relation to the use of Suggestopedia in the writing classroom.

1.2 Rationale for the Research

For many years, the traditional two-page “essay” (or, as some prefer, “prose composition”) has carried a substantial proportion of the composition of students' grades; more than that weighted by each of the pieces of prescribed literature (for example, National Education Policy Act 27/1996). While our Grade 12 “writing portfolios” also include shorter

("transactional", "functional") pieces, the longer essays still carry 62,5% of the original writing component ("Phasing in OBE.", 2002) . The "essay" is alive and well.

I have observed that the amount of time spent on teaching creative writing in the classroom is seldom even close to proportionate to the substantial mark allocation. Literature study, in particular, makes exceptionally high demands on teaching time. In theory, we are meant to have our students read ahead at home and thus free up classroom time for other activities. In practice, I have found that the texts prescribed are often too difficult for (especially non-mother tongue) students to cope with unassisted and hence find myself devoting almost all of my Grade 11 and 12 teaching time to reading literature aloud from start to finish, in some cases to students who do not own copies of the text.

Even in schools composed of predominantly mother-tongue students, I have observed that students often perform substantially better in their writing and "oral" assessments than they do in literature and "language" examinations. In many cases, it is students' "oral" and writing activities that successfully raise their results to passing grades. And this is despite what, in many cases, I have observed to be little or no instruction in the art and craft of writing.

In my experience, English teachers tend to view "compositions" primarily as a tool for assessment. We assign them, grade them, and return them. With little or no tuition, students generally achieve equivalent or better grades than they do in their literature and "language" assessments, even for mediocre or banal writing. Two random examples of technically competent but uninspiring writing follow:

(Grade 9)

There was an old lady who was married to an alcoholic who did not care for her. One day while she was pregnant she went to a fortune teller. The fortune teller told her that she was going to have a baby boy who would bring her millions.

(Grade 11)

Being a Hindu has a lot of advantages and a few setbacks. The Hindu culture is the oldest and by far the most amazing culture, in my opinion. The Hindu culture is more than a billion years old.

In my opinion, the first writer is so intent on creating a “story” that he has little time to convince the reader of his writing ability. The plot, in any case, is evidently fabricated; why should we care about the obviously non-existent old lady? The second, I argue, is something of a sermon that lacks colour and flavour. I outline my own position more overtly in the next chapter but at this point note that my own experience and education have led me to award A’s to writing that is more sincere, evocative, vivid, and “in-the-moment”.

And, while I agree with Bayat (2002, 4) that “...the producer of written texts in the post-apartheid classroom is still viewed as being independently capable of writing texts with minimal guidance and intervention from the educator”, I am not convinced that the traditional two-page composition is necessarily “monotonous and repetitive” (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993, 6). In my opinion, the formal “composition” is often one of the few “creative” elements of the curriculum and sometimes students’ only formal avenue for authentic cultural and experiential narrative. A successful writer takes satisfaction in creating his own knowledge rather than rehashing someone else’s.

Narrative is important. Bruner (“Lecture 14: Bruner”, 2004, 1) claims that we “...organize and constitute our experience of the world through narratives: stories, myths, excuses, reasons for doing or not doing things, plots that have a beginning, middle and end”. Jung’s term “archetype” refers to “the images and story patterns...in all human societies” (Deagon, 2005, 1). Mitchell’s (1981) *On Narrative* collects the views of historians, writers, psychoanalysts, philosophers and literary critics on the importance of narrative, including Derrida’s “The Law of Genre” and LeGuin’s “It Was a Dark and Stormy Night; or, Why We Are Huddling Around the Campfire”. Even major business publications have carried articles on the importance of narrative, for example the *Wall Street Journal* (Bennett, 2003) and *Harvard Business Review* (McKee, 2003). The word “storytelling” has begun to appear in management books such as Gabriel’s (2000) *Storytelling in Organizations*.

One website (“Accidental By-Product”, 2003) sums it up as follows:

Storytelling is natural and easy, entertaining and energizing. Stories help us understand complexity. Stories can enhance or change perceptions. Stories are easy to remember. They bypass normal defence mechanisms and engage our feelings. They are a great tool for exploring ideas, stretching our thinking, and communicating...Stories matter. Indeed, they've always mattered. It's just that there has been a tendency to not only underestimate their power in terms of connecting with different groups but also to misjudge how well they enable individuals to flesh out their innermost thoughts and feelings...In a world where dialogue, thinking, leadership and innovation are critical to our future prosperity, then storytelling and story analysis is a skill we should all master.

Perhaps our “natural” gift for storytelling is warped by the educational system itself. The traditional practice of the teacher marking errors in red pen has suggested to some students that the point of the whole exercise is to “catch you out” for spelling and grammar errors. Some teachers probably also think this is the main idea. An inspection of the memoranda issued by the South African education departments (for example “Phasing in OBE”, 2002, 22), however, shows this is not the case: spelling and punctuation are usually weighted only about 10% of the final grade. Surely distinctive writing is inspired rather than just correct? Is inspired writing not “art” that alters or challenges our perceptions? Our world view?

With a little attention, surely we could have our students creating riveting writing, substantially improving their grades, and consequently gaining profoundly in confidence? In contemplating my research, I considered the following questions: How can I find ways to help students rise to the challenge and produce pieces of writing that demonstrate sincerity of purpose, relevance, and cultural awareness? Perhaps Lozanov's unique educational methodology can help me to communicate the generic conventions of “prose compositions” to my students so that they may be able to reflect their own lives, values, and aspirations in such essays.

Can a Suggestopedic methodology accelerate the process of writing development to help students create “inspired” compositions? Can Lozanov's state of “concentrative psychorelaxation” help students create narrative or descriptive writing with a Zen-like, “in-the-moment” quality? Can I alter my own preconceptions and expect A's all round rather than the mediocre 53% I am so fond of awarding? Can my students learn the generic

conventions of the essay so well that I will be forced to award many distinctions despite the expected statistical “bell-shaped curve”¹? In rising to this challenge, can my students become “empowered”- creatively, politically, and academically? Might Suggestopedia help me to accelerate my teaching of other components of the curriculum, such as literature study, in order that I might have more time to work on “language”, “orals” and creative writing? While creative writing is a heavily weighted component of the student’s final grade, how can I assist students to lift the quality of their compositions beyond banality? How can I utilize knowledge about the brain to achieve this? And how can Lozanov, a pioneer in this field, assist me?

In the following section, I provide a rationale for my choice of Suggestopedia as a methodology.

1.3 Why Lozanov?

Kline (1976, 2) claims that Suggestopedia offers:

- an imaginative (and enjoyable!) alternative to more traditional, rigid, and artificial approaches
- a number of practical and creative ideas for classroom use,
- a number of ways to strengthen the process of encoding into memory,
- improvements in the behaviour and attitudes of students, student achievement, improved school climate, attendance and teacher morale, and
- a global rather than a piecemeal approach; a holographic rather than a linear approach.

In addition, a number of researchers (such as Rose, 1989) claim that Suggestopedia offers quick memorization, efficient recall, and subsequent long-term use of new vocabulary in a second or foreign language. Such textbook applications of the Lozanov method may constitute a real and effective tool to help us restore linguistic equity in South Africa.

¹ The so-called “normal” curve is defined by Encarta (2005) as “(the) name for the average distribution of characteristics, which when plotted on a graph is shaped like a bell. It is a continuous frequency distribution, of infinite range, of the kind produced by aiming at a target with random errors. The shape of the graph represents a plot of the errors. The mean score is the target and the standard deviation is a summary of the distribution of the errors (the square root of the variance)”.

Imagine countrywide implementations of “accelerated” Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, English, and Afrikaans courses. If Suggestopedia can indeed produce “accelerated” learning, surely we should also be using it in the broader South African education system, where we are still trying to redress gross educational inequities?

In my experience, Lozanov’s formulation of an integrated and highly efficient learning procedure remains completely unknown to most high school teachers despite its ingenious use of multi-sensory input, colourful visuals, imagery, music, dance, drama, games, and physical activities. I propose that any teacher- language or otherwise- can gain new strategies and classroom applications from Suggestopedia’s practical and eclectic approach. Its imaginative spirit surely also complements the field of creative writing.

Hart (1983) argues that most educational institutions are brain-antagonistic rather than brain-compatible “...pervaded as they are by over-structuring, over-control, over-confinement, lock-step, linear sequence—and above all by a fear of consequences if the established norms are not adhered to” (Dhority, 1984, 1.1). Such an environment is clearly at odds with creative writing, the purpose of which is to develop expressive as well as thinking skills, empathy, and critical understanding. Suggestopedia in the writing classroom, however, may offer an escape from the box.

Gold (2002, 1) explains how a Suggestopedic methodology adapts the school syllabus to how the human brain really works. Rather than reducing knowledge to simplistic structures, it aims to provide a rich and stimulating environment in which the brain can “make order out of chaos and... (detect) recurring patterns”. Rather than trying to “exercise stifling control”, Suggestopedia sets the stage for “miracles of discovery” to occur. Perhaps Suggestopedia might assist students to experience Eureka-like “miracles of discovery” in terms of inspiration for writing and thus facilitate their development into more sensitive, observant, and literate citizens.

If Suggestopedia can achieve the lofty goals expressed in the words of Zucca (2003, 1) below, surely its appeal can be tapped in the writing classroom?

Suggestopedia addresses students' whole personality with particular emphasis on psychological and emotional factors. Its applications improve class atmosphere and motivation in contemporary, multicultural and diverse classroom settings... (E)very student and every single individual is precious in an open, multifaceted environment. Every element of the teaching/learning process becomes interdependent, and every learning experience reveals itself as unique and special.

While Suggestopedia is best known for foreign language teaching, the emphasis on “class atmosphere” and the individual suggests that the Lozanov method might complement the field of creative writing, an endeavour in which the demands on the brain are very different to those of Biology or Math.

Perhaps the educational implications of contemporary neurological research, such as in Jensen's (2000) “brain-based” learning, can also be applied to English teaching in general and the teaching of creative writing in particular.

In addition, I hope that this project will help my students develop more self-confidence both within and beyond the writing classroom. Finally, I think we should take seriously any method that claims to add joy to the learning environment.

The following questions, then, summarize my focus in this study:

- How has Suggestopedia helped me to improve my own practice?
- How can I adapt the principles of Accelerated Learning, “Brain-Based Learning”, and other incarnations of the Lozanov model to my Durban-South multilingual and multicultural high school English (ex-)² classroom?
- To borrow from the diction of Critical Literacy, can I help students learn the essay's generic conventions and thus be “empowered” to create compositions that demand A's?

² Since this project, I have moved to a school closer to my home.

- Can I suggest some creative ideas for other high school English teachers, some of whom might be bamboozled by “Outcomes-based” jargon and looking for inspiring alternatives?
- In the long run, might the principles of Suggestopedia be useful to accelerate learning and transformation beyond the English classroom and thus help South Africa redress certain apartheid-decreed educational inequities?
- Can I give myself the gift of something more satisfying to read than “Corruption is very bad among politicians”?

In the following section, I provide an overview of the study that emerged from these questions.

1.4 Overview of the Dissertation

My aim in Chapter II is to sketch a context for this study. Thus, I outline the history of the teaching of creative writing from structuralism to postmodernism, sum up my own position as a “personal growth” teacher, and describe my Durban South (-ex) school in post-apartheid South Africa.

My main concerns in Chapter III are to define and describe Suggestopedia in some detail. I do so to give readers unfamiliar with the Lozanov methodology a good idea of its construction before I adapt it specifically to my English classroom. In this chapter, then, I discuss the origins of suggestion and describe associated theories (placebo, Rosenthal, and “Snowball” effects) before providing a more detailed description of Suggestopedia as well as “Accelerated” and “Brain-based” learning.

In describing the research methods in Chapter IV, I propose a qualitative, narrative, “literary” approach in keeping with the creative products of the study. In addition, this chapter outlines my planning for the project and describes the research sample.

In Chapter V, I describe the project, including preparation and implementation as well as the collection and analysis of data. In describing the preparation for the project, I share with other teachers my own adaptation of Suggestopedia for the study of literature, in particular the Grade 12 study of a Shakespearian tragedy.

In Chapter VI, I reflect on Suggestopedia from educational, neurological, and literary perspectives and conclude that it is a versatile methodology that can be successfully utilized in the high school English classroom. I plead that Lozanov's methodology should be taken seriously by university education departments rather than be further commercialised. In looking towards the future, I suggest that the tenets of Suggestopedia can be useful in the design of "multimedia" educational computer programs.

Contexts: Personal, National, and Institutional

A generation of men is like a generation of leaves; the wind scatters some leaves upon the ground, while others the burgeoning wood brings forth - and the season of spring comes on. So of men one generation springs forth and another ceases.

-Homer (c. 750 B.C.)

The new age of education is programmed for discovery rather than instruction. Art as radar environment, radar feedback, early warning system: the antennae of the race.

-Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

Like Suggestopedia, creative writing draws on the personality. It skirts the precarious boundary between aesthetic and pretentiousness, and must be, together with Art, the most subjectively assessed element of the curriculum. My expectations about “great writing” are coloured indelibly by my education and experience. The reader thus requires some knowledge of my theoretical orientation and indeed personality. My aim in this chapter is to provide the reader with such a context.

To offer an explanation of my being aligned with the “personal growth” school of teaching writing³, the first section of this background chapter details my own journey in English and creative writing from Leavisite thinking to the present day. In the second section, to provide distant readers with an idea of current educational practice in South Africa, I sketch some of the recent changes in the local pedagogical milieu. In the third section, to provide an immediate context, I describe my ex-school and outline the impact of some of the broader educational changes on this institution.

³ This view of English teaching, promulgated by Dixon (1969), values students’ direct experiences and stresses creativity, students’ social needs, and the development of students’ responses. Process writing and whole language learning are two of the pedagogical approaches recommended.

2.1 Personal Context: From “Standard English” to “Critical Literacy”

My own schooling was traditionally teacher-centred, and, since we were forced to endure both Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Silas Marner* (1861) in Standard 8, seemingly still firmly in the canonical grip of Leavisite thinking: elitist, Eurocentric, and filled with “inequities and obliquities” (Parr, 2005, 1).

My young teacher, however, apologized for the choice of novels and made it clear he had had no part in their selection. He offered a glimpse at another perspective when he brought his guitar to school and sang us a Joni Mitchell song in a poetry lesson.

I can recall few high school lessons on the art of writing except for technical work on paragraphing. One teacher advised us to start “with a bang” and to “end with something strong”.

At university, my linguistic landscape widened further, and Standard English was no longer everything. “Literature” now encompassed rap songs, prayers, and graffiti. We designed worksheets on slang and cartoons as well as language in relation to power and gender. While we were required to demonstrate our own proficiency in formal grammar, we were taught that it had been shown to have absolutely no positive effects on the quality of students’ writing.

We were encouraged to have our students write journals in which we ignored technical errors and simply responded to their words. In their “formal” essays, we were discouraged from having our students do “corrections”. We were urged to set topics that would inspire genuine and sincere compositions. In retrospect, I see that my training was deeply infused by the so-called “personal growth” paradigm, (for example, Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen, 1975).

As a result of my background and training, one of the best ways to impress me as a writing teacher is with a vivid, visual opening such as: “The sun was glinting in the morning sky”. I usually suggest that my students paint a picture of the setting, share a personal experience, and conclude with something strong and sincere.

To a degree, my own journey parallels trends in English teaching in the last century. I have found McLuhan’s (1967) “medium is the message” notion to be useful in structuring this historical outline. I argue that the journey of English teaching from Leavis⁴ (1895–1978) to the present parallels the evolution from linear, “print” thinking to more immediate, acoustic “global village” thought:

When new media enter society, ...patterns of perception shift according to the effects of the new technology.... The conceptual/dialectical world of literacy replaced the perceptual world of tribal culture. After centuries of dominance, literacy itself was outpaced in the nineteenth century by the new electronic media, resurrecting former acoustic patterns. A re-tribalization of western society along these patterns occurred. Electric culture created a world once again attuned to the poetic, suppressed for centuries by the ascendancy of dialectics...

(“Basic McLuhan”, 2005, 1)

Miller (2005, 7) describes the “traditional English” approach as being “...the English of the linguistic ‘standards’ or ‘basic skills’ of grammar and rhetoric...” Until the 1970s, he argues, the writing classroom was preoccupied with technical proficiency. Students were expected to master the technical skills of handwriting, grammar, and spelling. Much teaching time was devoted to grammatical drills and long parsing exercises. Writing was expected to be grammatically correct. Miller (*Ibid.*, 7) explains how this approach...

...paralleled the dominant ideological paradigm that knowledge involved the transmission of factual knowledge, which could be strictly categorised as either correct or incorrect. So it was with language instruction. The syntax of writing either followed the rules or it did not.

⁴ The progressive movement and its associated “personal growth” paradigm are perhaps a reaction to the more elitist ideas of Leavis, who, according to Encarta (2005), “...developed... ideas (about) practical criticism and close reading into a polemic against mass culture. His embattled and abrasive personal style, coupled with a perverse but brilliantly articulate insistence on moral rigour made him notorious, to the extent that ‘Leavisite’ remains a potent label in literary culture”.

Such a pedagogy, Miller argues, was “bottom-up” and conformed to the prevailing pedagogical philosophy, which constructed learning as “...developing in an incremental and sequential fashion” (*Ibid.*, 8).

In McLuhan’s terms (1995, 240), this is surely the linear paradigm of the printing press:

The phonetic alphabet fell like a bombshell, installing sight at the head of the hierarchy of senses. Literacy propelled man from the tribe, gave him an eye for an ear, and replaced his integral in-depth communal interplay with visual linear values and fragmented consciousness.

The oldest English textbook on my bookshelf has long lost its cover and the first 30 pages. The title is visible on the spine: *English for Junior Forms*, but even mighty Google cannot help me to trace author and publication details. The linear approach is evident in the lengthy “Grammar” chapter, which begins with distinguishing sentences from phrases and subject from predicate, then moves meticulously through the eight parts of speech. Later, the chapter covers more advanced grammar: sentence analysis, the voice and complement of the verb, and the infinitive, participle, and gerund. The following three chapters cover “Errors in Grammar and Composition”, “Hints on Essay Writing”, and a list of 106 essay topics including “What I Saw in the Game Reserve”, “Our School Choir”, and “The Weekday I Like Best”. The topics for paragraph writing in the next chapter include “An Unexpected Present”, “The Christmas Stocking”, and “The First Morning of the Holidays”. While these topics may lack some of the quasi-psychological, revelatory style of the “personal growth” model, not one looks so antediluvian that it would seem completely out of place today.

Further chapters cover “transactional” writing including telegrams, advertisements, letters, and invitations. The content of the writing curriculum has indeed changed little since the publication of this textbook. The underlying thinking, however, has shifted considerably since this grammar-based, “linear” paradigm, one more example of which follows.

The oldest textbook I can find with clear publication details is *Junior Secondary School English 7* (Fletcher and Scales, 1974). While this textbook contains comprehension

extracts by contemporary writers, I believe certain elements are consistent with the “traditional”, linear paradigm. After the requisite “comprehension” passage, the first chapter deals with word-building, subject and predicate, “discussion” and “writing”. In this chapter, the “discussion” and “writing” topics are the same, likely to result in a classful of very similar “factual” responses, distinguishable from one another almost only by the level of technical sophistication:

- The training of animals
- Radio programmes- interesting and uninteresting
- Hobbies such as bee-keeping; photography; stamp-collecting
- Babysitting problems

Wright, Winser Cranny-Francis, and Muir (1995, 1) argue that, while Leavis tried to reawaken the “traditional culture of the people” that was the basis for the literary culture,...

...it was the reading of literature that provided a potent basis for the necessary social harmony that was required in the debased cultural environment of a mass industrial society... This was essentially a liberal and individualist stance that needed a moral and intellectual elite to promulgate it.

According to Dawson (1999, 1), “...Leavis could find no place for creative writing in his ideal discipline, finding universities neither qualified nor appropriate for the education of writers.”

Challenging the linear world of the printing press was the new medium: “electronic circuitry”. McLuhan (1967) holds that the new electric media stimulated the acoustic sense, moving our sensory orientation from the eye to the ear. Elsewhere, McLuhan (1995, 290) claims: “The movie, by sheer speeding up of the mechanical, carried us from the world of sequence and connections into the world of creative configurations and structure”.

The progressive movement⁵ may be interpreted as a movement from the private world of the reader to the more acoustic and tribal “global village”. Through more “instant” media such as television, we became more aware of and responsible for one another.

⁵ Associated with, *inter alia*, Holbrook (1964), Britton (1970a), and Dixon (1969).

Suggestopedia's progressive foundation emphasizes the whole rather than the graded line.

In English teaching, we dropped the elitist attitude and sought the emotional development of the student. Progressivists Holbrook (1964, 1967) and Britton (1970a, 1970b) led a "psychological" revolution concerned with the "inner development" of the child. Miller (2005, 13) argues that Freud's emphasis on "inner exploration" became the cornerstone of Modernism: "It substantially realigned writers, architects, musicians, and visual artists' work from reflecting the external world (labelled now as realism) to reflecting the internal 'reality'".

Miller argues that this paradigm shift led to the entrenched perception of many English teachers that children learn to speak and listen naturally, effortlessly, and without explicit teaching and thus learn to read and write in the same way. Ball, Kenny and Gardiner (1990, 58) sum up the change thus:

(T)he English teacher was no longer to be a missionary disseminating the values of civilization but an anthropologist mapping and collecting the values and culture of subordinate groups, initially the working class (later girls and blacks)...

In terms of creative writing, Miller (2005, 13) argues:

(T)his ideology still has some currency today as many teachers are reluctant to take an interventionist stance in students' response writing...Firstly, teachers often see the process of writing development as something that occurs 'naturally' as all learners move through cognitive stages towards sophistication of thought and language. Secondly, teachers try to avoid any interference with, or contamination of, the student's 'authentic' or creative voice.

Influenced by psychoanalysis, Holbrook (1964, 1967) believed the development of personality to be the principal goal of English teaching. Such development was to be achieved through narrative, poetry and drama because they provided an emotional response. To the progressivists, Miller argues (2005, 16), "...sincerity and authenticity are the hallmarks of creative writing, which should be directly related to the personal experiences of the students". The rationale for such writing is that "...the expression of

emotion through writing...(has) therapeutic value, enabling learners to come to terms with themselves and thereby develop into healthier persons” (*Ibid.*, 17).

For Britton, whose work gained ground in the 1970s, personal development is the proper focus for English teaching (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen, 1975). His approach stresses learning through oral language and involves small group talk as well as whole class discussions⁶. The “personal growth” approach has led many teachers to see hands-on experience and student talk as providing more effective learning than teacher lectures (Rothery and Stenglin, 1997, 226).

The “personal growth” pedagogy promotes the writer’s freedom of choice and assumes that the content of the writing comes from his real-life experience (Britton *et al*, 1975). The assumption is that the student has a wide range of linguistic experiences upon which he can readily draw when given the opportunity. Miller (2005, 17) explains that, in Britton’s progressive paradigm, the everyday knowledge students bring to school is seen as the most highly valued resource for writing. Whitehead (1966, 153) claims that writing lessons should focus on the thoughts, feelings and experiences that have to be communicated.

The progressive movement is criticised “...because its very subjectivity preclude(s) any explicit or systematic pedagogy” (Miller, 2005, 17) and because it simply reproduces a student’s “common-sense” (for example Christie, 1990) rather than promoting more critical faculties.

Wright, Winsor, Cranny-Francis and Muir (1995, 1) argue that the “liberal-humanist” perspective is unlikely to engage the student in political or ideological activity since it operates in...

...the privileged sphere of universal truths and values:...The association of literature with personal growth removes this movement from the domain of politics, and therefore from matters of power and control.

⁶ This is clearly related to the “communicative language teaching” (CLT) approach which was based on classroom interaction and popularized in Britain in the 1960s (Yalden, 1987).

My liberal Wits⁷ education honed me into the “personal growth” teacher that I am today and prepared me well for the nine years in which I worked in “white” schools in Johannesburg.

My beliefs and expectations were then challenged and expanded by two forces: political transformation in South Africa, which I discuss in the following section, and my exposure to postmodernism and critical literacy, which I discuss now as they complete my journey in thought until this point.

Postmodernist thinking⁸ evolved a new pedagogical methodology: Critical Literacy. In this paradigm, language is a socio-cultural practice. Every social practice is embedded in an historical context and serves particular interests. In concentrating on personal narratives and not teaching a wider range of genres, it is argued that we are in fact withholding, especially from disadvantaged students, the middle-class “codes” of academic register required for success in tertiary education (Rothery and Stenglin, 1997). Critical Literacy thus aims to give students the chance to understand the organization of texts and how they achieve particular social purposes (Cope and Kalantzakis, 1993).

Parr (2005, 1) welcomes the new emphasis on diversity and local culture but warns that we should “...recognize where many of our best arguments come from, and count the cost of the fashionable nihilisms that have seduced so many agile minds”.

While Critical Literacy has demonstrated successfully that all texts are ideological (Clark and Ivanić, 1997) and contributed the “genre approach” to the writing classroom, the

⁷ The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

⁸ Encarta (2005) calls Postmodernism “part of a general attack on Enlightenment truth-claims and values, and (it) displays a preoccupation with language as an inadequate vehicle for expressing any sort of “reality”. It also cites Barthes’ (1967) “analyses of society as a system of signs and codes” and Foucault’s (1966) “theories about the nature of power and repression”.

imaginative component has perhaps not been comfortably accommodated. After posing the question “What are we creating in creative writing?”, Misson (2005, 1) argues:

(W)e are creating ourselves. We write ourselves into being....we are creating a world. By framing whatever we're looking at in particular ways, we create a particular version of the world (and all worlds are only versions). (C)ritical literacy is predominantly a pedagogy of reception – reading and listening. You look at texts and you see how they are constructed, what values are being promoted, what is absent from the text, how it's trying to position you ideologically, how it's trying to make you receive it. I think this way of working created an inherent problem in developing a writing pedagogy...(I)f you believe that all texts are ideological (and undoubtedly they are) ..., that makes you inclined to see the writer as the enemy... then what a writing pedagogy would seem to be doing is teaching people how to become one of these morally suspect people who write ideologically slanted texts of which we all really ought to be deeply suspicious.

Simultaneous to my scholastic growth, living and working in a transforming country since 1994 has forced me to rethink elements of my ideology and practice. The following section describes some of the educational changes in South Africa since democracy.

2.2 National Context: From Apartheid to Transformation

This section narrows the focus of this discussion to the contemporary South African education system, which has attempted to transform itself completely since the 1994 election.

Under apartheid, the education system was used “...to reinforce notions of white superiority and black inferiority, as well as the reproduction of notions of male superiority and female inferiority” (Nzimande, 2001, 1). While I and my white, English-speaking peers enjoyed our extensive facilities, free textbooks, and qualified teachers, black students in “township” schools were allocated a fraction of the same budget⁹.

As English first language students, we were more likely to be exposed to teachers of the “personal growth” persuasion while (Afrikaans and black) students doing “second language” English probably had a more “traditional”, grammar-based experience.

⁹ Boddy-Evans (2007) claims that the 1982 education budget by the apartheid government was, on average, R1211 for each white child and only R146 for each black child..

In the early 1990's, certain previously "white" schools opted to become "Model C" schools, which gave them more autonomy, freedom to admit up to 50% of "non-white" students, and reduced government resources. While government continued to pay teachers' salaries, most maintenance and associated costs were borne by schools (Pampallis, 2002, 10).

Since 1994, apartheid structures have been dismantled, and the curriculum has been substantially adapted in an attempt to fulfil the requirement of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) that "...education be transformed and democratised in accordance with the values of human dignity, equality, human rights and freedom, non-racism, and non-sexism" ("Education Change", 2001, 1).

Since 1994, the country has developed a unified, national educational system, a new standards and qualifications authority, and a re-orientation to "outcomes-based" methodology, one aim of which is to produce "...a thinking, problem-solving citizen who will be empowered to participate in the development of the country in an active and productive way" (Van der Horst and McDonald, 1997, 6).

South Africa's "Curriculum 2005" (C2005) is described by the Education Department ("Education Change", 1) as an attempt to "...move away from a racist, apartheid, rote learning model of learning and teaching to a liberating, nation-building and learner-centred outcomes-based one". So-called "outcomes-based"¹⁰ methodology, while less syllabus-bound than more traditional approaches, claims to allow for more teacher and student creativity. A current acronym is CASS, for "Continuous Assessment": teachers are required to administer a prescribed number of assessments during the teaching year, including essays, shorter written pieces, and class tests.

¹⁰ One of this movement's foremost proponents is Spady (1994) although he has reportedly tried to distance himself from some of the forms taken by "OBE." (Chion-Kenney 1994, 18).

So-called “outcomes-based” education has been criticized vehemently. Jansen (2007), for example, claims it is complex, contradictory, intimidating, misguided, misinformed, mechanistic, and behaviouristic. The new assessment system has also been criticized for being bureaucratic, overly demanding in its requirements, and for favouring girls (Venter, 2003). A scathing criticism is argued by Sarinjeve (2007, 1), who calls it “...one-sided, power-based, and capitalistic...” and describes it as “...beginning to be framed in a manner that facilitates bureaucratic control and administration”. Towers (1992, 94) explains how, in the OBE model, it is assumed that all academic success is observable and can be measured.

Within so-called “outcomes-based” methodology, assessment is no longer simply an activity undertaken by an all-powerful teacher, and “self-assessment” and “peer assessment” are now legitimate. I have often heard English teachers say that so-called “outcomes-based” education is what they’d been doing all along anyway.

Despite these “outcomes-based” changes, the creative writing curriculum has changed only very slightly with the main change being that students submit writing “portfolios” instead of sitting a writing “examination”. At least one essay is required to be written under “controlled conditions”, and thus students are still sometimes required to be creative on tap. In 2008, however, the writing examination is being re-introduced (“National Curriculum Statement”, 2007), and suddenly the whole writing curriculum is exactly where it was in 1993. In short, students still write “essays”, letters, and reviews in response to “topics”.

To give the reader an idea of how these political and educational voices converged on a real institution and of the type of “prose compositions” required by the school’s English Department, the final section of this chapter describes the immediate context of my ex-school.

2.3 School Context: From “Model C” to Cutting Edge

When I arrived at the school (a co-educational, “ex-Model C” high school in Umbilo, Durban, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa) in 2002, the school’s transition from a purely “white” institution into a democratic one was almost complete.

By 2004, the racial composition of the student body had been transformed from exclusively “white” to almost exclusively “non-white”: the 2004 school population was almost 750 students, the vast majority of whom were black with isiZulu as their home language. Of course, as a result of educational reforms begun after 1994, “Model C” schools no longer existed, and I now worked simply at another government school.

Thus, a school that had previously catered primarily for those who lived in the immediate area now admitted students from all over wider Durban. Some of my students who lived in the “townships” suffered ostracism as a result of being seen in their blazers: their comments suggested to me that suburban, “ex-Model C” schools were perceived by some township residents as “posh” and elitist.

When I arrived at the school, these were some of the changes that had already occurred: A white rugby school had become a black soccer school. A white headmaster had given way to an Indian headmaster. A “rough” school had become, in the eyes of some, a more prestigious institution. The pool was used to teach beginners’ swimming rather than for elite galas. In addition to offering Afrikaans as a second language, the school now also offered isiZulu and had its first black teachers.

Remnants of the old order remained, however. The teaching staff were still predominantly white and Indian, and the curriculum was still in the process of being transformed. I found myself in the bizarre situation of teaching “English First Language Higher Grade” to classes composed almost exclusively of first language isiZulu students. My discussions with parents, however, showed that this was exactly what many wanted for their children: a

solid foundation in the lingua franca. For those students who had borne the brunt of underfunded apartheid education and were barely literate, however, this goal was distant.

Although some of the provincially prescribed Grade 12 literature networks were African, most of the works prescribed internally by the English Department in Grades 10 and 11 were British or American: Priestley's (1947) *An Inspector Calls*, Lee's (1960) *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Weir's (1989) film *Dead Poets' Society*, and Shakespeare's (c.1607) *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. We read some African short stories, quite a lot of African poetry, and, in Grade 11, Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart*.

As I noted in the previous section, what we did in "creative writing" was largely unchanged. A sample of the school's end-of-term examination is reproduced overleaf (Figure 1). The examination provides a wide range of topics designed to inspire narrative ("The agony of love"), descriptive ("The concrete jungle"), and argumentative ("The government does not care about crime in South Africa") compositions. In the three years I taught at the school, I observed that most students chose to write factual or argumentative pieces. While this may sometimes have been a sensible choice, in my opinion the result tended to be a plethora of rather dull truisms condemning or praising abortion, corporal punishment, or World Cup sporting events. The few students who did venture into narrative inevitably submitted outlandish fiction or rehashed television.

While the demographics of the student body had changed substantially, the list of topics, I think, does not appear to have made any concessions to the predominantly isiZulu-speaking student body. Perhaps, in this case, some students probably chose to write about why the government does not care about crime in South Africa (topic 1) or "Strike!" (topic 2) because they were unfamiliar with the term "concrete jungle" (topic 4) or the word "agony" (topic 3). Also, I recall that many students were not sure how to respond in their essays to pictorial stimuli.

The circumstances under which these examinations were written were not always conducive to the creation of inspired writing. During the years I worked at the school, the entire student body wrote an “essay examination” at least three times a year, usually on the last day of term.

HIGH SCHOOL

THIRD TERM ESSAY

Write an essay of approximately TWO A-4 pages in length on ONE of the following topics. Pay close attention to planning as well as to presentation. Marks will be awarded for fluency and development of ideas.

1. “The Government does not care about crime in South Africa” Discuss your views.
2. Strike!
3. The agony of love!
4. The concrete jungle.
5. Choose ONE of the two pictures below and write an essay based upon it. Give your essay a title.



Figure 1. Original writing examination (2002).

In my experience, English essay papers are used in many schools as a control mechanism to discourage end-of-term truancy. At this particular school, these examinations also served

to fulfil most of the requirements of the Education Department in terms of completing writing “portfolios” and compiling students’ end-of-term grades. My experience was that, while this practice did encourage students to attend school on the last day of term, pre-vacation excitement and something of a carnival atmosphere at school made it difficult for some students to give full attention to their writing.

My task, as I saw it, was to teach my students about narrative and descriptive writing, I wanted them to experiment with choosing such topics rather than the “safe” discursive or argumentative options. I wanted to encourage creativity, out-of-the-box thinking, and some passion, feeling, or poeticism. I wanted them to learn to become comfortable with writing about their own lives.

But my “personal growth” expectations were largely enigmatic to my students, discussions with many of whom had revealed that their previous “black” schools had stressed correctness and structure rather than creativity, vividness, and personal revelation. Here was another “code” to be “cracked” besides the broader, Western hegemonic “hidden curriculum” in this “ex-Model C” school with its “traditional” school hall replete with “colours boards” listing white rugby captains.

I wanted my students to learn how to respond to pictorial, narrative, or descriptive stimuli. I felt that I needed to provide some substantial teaching time to this section of the curriculum as equally weighted as the other components yet so often not overtly “taught”. I hoped that Suggestopedia might provide an efficient way to teach students how to respond to narrative or descriptive topics and to enjoy creating “authentic” and “inspired” compositions.

In this chapter, then, I have shown how my own “personal growth” pedagogical alignment inspired me to want to “unpack” the generic conventions of the “prose composition” for the benefit of those of my students who had not been exposed to the kind of “vivid”,

revelatory writing I rewarded. I hope also to have provided a sense of some of the current challenges of working in a transforming South Africa.

Before I can describe how I adapted the principles of Suggestopedia in my English classroom, however, the reader requires a working knowledge of the Suggestopedic methodology. The following chapter, then, outlines the principles of Suggestopedia, attempts to define Suggestopedia, and describes the Suggestopedic process. In addition, it briefly describes two offshoots of Suggestopedia: “Accelerated” and “Brain-Based” Learning.

Chapter III:
Defining Suggestopedia: Principles, Process, and Research

*For dear to gods and men is sacred song. Self-taught I sing; by Heaven, and Heaven
alone, The genuine seeds of poesy are sown.*
-Homer (c.750 B.C.)

All words, in every language, are metaphors.
-Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

In order that the reader might understand fully how I adapted Suggestopedia to the teaching of creative writing, I offer the following description of the classical Suggestopedic principles and process as devised by Lozanov (1978a). My description is comprehensive for the benefit of those readers who seek a detailed overview of Suggestopedia's complex methodology.

I begin by discussing some theories with which Suggestopedia shares its roots: suggestion, hypnosis, and Mesmerism, as well as placebo, "snowball", and Rosenthal "effects". It is important to be aware of these because Suggestopedia may draw some of its power through their incorporation. My discussion of the use of suggestion and hypnosis is the most detailed in this section as the Yogic/ "brainwashing" connotations constitute the most controversial element of Suggestopedia.

Secondly, in an effort to deepen the reader's understanding of Suggestopedia beyond the "flavour" I offered in the opening chapter, I devote an entire section to defining Suggestopedia. This requires an understanding of Lozanov's broader term "Suggestology".

In the third section, I describe Lozanov's formal "Principles of Suggestopedia". These constitute Lozanov's attempt to sum up the key elements of the methodology. That he

chose to condense his original list of six principles to a revised list of only three principles is interesting because it shows Lozanov's evolving understanding of his own work.

In the fourth section, to elucidate the process further, I describe the method itself: the so-called Suggestopedic cycle and the unique classroom and textbook.

In an effort to persuade the reader of the efficacy and vast potential of Suggestopedia, the fifth section offers a summation of some of the key studies in the field.

Finally, the sixth section describes two later incarnations of the Lozanov method: "Accelerated Learning" and "Brain-Based Learning". While both have offered new insights, I conclude here that they are both essentially derived from Suggestopedia.

3.1 Theories Associated with Suggestopedia

Suggestion and hypnosis as well as placebo, "snowball", and Rosenthal "effects" are theories that share common ground with Suggestopedia and may contribute towards its efficacy. The placebo and Rosenthal "effects" are commonly "controlled for" in empirical studies, thus their inclusion may complicate the research design of studies involving Suggestopedia. But it is the connection with hypnosis that has turned out to be Suggestopedia's most controversial element, so I shall begin this section by discussing suggestion, Mesmerism, and hypnosis.

3.1.1 Mesmerism, Hypnosis, and Suggestion

While the most logical beginning point for this discussion is the word "suggestion", this leads us into realms seldom visited in pedagogical theory, such as hypnosis. Some teachers may be suspicious of the bohemian, quasi-Yogic/hypnotic connotations of Suggestopedia (especially the meditative "Passive Concert"). They may equate Lozanov's method with hypnosis and consequently view it as unsuitable or even dangerous in the classroom.

Prichard (1980, 7) explains that the “theoreticians of magnetism” worked on the assumption that magnets drew “...inflammatory diseases, hysteria, and epilepsy from the body...” Mesmer¹¹, Prichard claims, attributed the healing he observed to the action of an “animal magnetism” that emanated from the operator and radiated toward the patient. In 1784, Mesmer was discredited by a commission that claimed his successes were due to his own personality rather than any kind of “animal magnetism”.

Bootzin (1980, 26) describes Mesmerism as follows:

Mesmer’s therapy for his hysterical patients was quite exotic. In solemn ceremony, the patients would enter a room and seat themselves around a huge vat containing bottles of various fluids from which iron rods protruded. The lights were dimmed, and soft music was played. Then Mesmer himself appeared, “magnetic” wand in hand and lavender cape behind him. He passed from patient to patient, touching various parts of their bodies with his hands, with his wand, and with the rods protruding from the vat, in order to readjust the distribution of their magnetic fluids.

Bootzin goes on to argue that the most surprising observation about Mesmer’s treatment is that it seemed in many cases to have worked. While Mesmer was barred from practice in both Vienna and Paris, even the investigating physicians noted what has subsequently been recognized as his great contribution to psychiatry: the power of suggestion.

British physician Braid (1795-1860) proposed that the magnets were unnecessary and replaced them with “...prolonged gazing on a bright object or almost any other attention-focusing device” (Prichard, 1980, 8). Braid also renamed the technique “hypnosis” from the Greek word “ύπνος” (sleep).

Suggestion, Prichard explains (*Ibid.*, 10), “...may be accepted more readily due to dependence upon, fear of, and fondness for some other person or persons”, in other words the charisma or personal influence of the experimenter. He goes on to discuss the power of suggestion in medicine, thereafter to argue that, if medical professionals use suggestion so effectively, why cannot teachers apply the same theories in their areas of expertise?

¹¹ Mesmer (1733-1815) was an Austrian physician whose work is the foundation of hypnosis.

Felix (1989, 33) argues that, while suggestion is an important part of hypnosis, whether suggestion (or Suggestopedia) has an hypnotic effect or not is debatable. Stanton (1978, 250) claims that "...the only difference between Suggestopedia and hypnosis is in the name", both characterised as they are by an initial preparation phase to provoke expectancy, a presentation phase in which the student or patient focuses on some non-related object, and a "practice" phase. Lozanov claims that Suggestopedia is unlike hypnosis because suggestions are administered exclusively with the student in the waking state (Felix, 1978, 251). Indeed, Tart's (1969, 167) definition of light hypnosis sounds very much like Suggestopedia: "...a state of relaxed wakefulness, accompanied by receptivity to suggestion, with alpha brain waves as the dominant pattern." Bayuk (1983, 36) agrees that Lozanov's descriptions of the Suggestopedic state closely parallel Tart's observations of light hypnosis.

Lozanov (1978a, 119) maintains that a person in a truly hypnotic state is no longer critical and able to describe what is experienced while the same person under the influence of suggestion in a waking state remains perfectly aware and critical. In discussing the use of suggestion and hypnosis for the purpose of anaesthesia, he explains that suggestion...

...has considerable advantage over hypnosis; it permits not only a safer operation, but creates conditions under which the dynamics of suggestive anaesthetization can be observed in the various stages of the operation. (*Ibid.*, 120)

Lozanov (1978a, 269) made several changes to his educational method as a result of the unsatisfactory link with hypnosis including eliminating all "monotonous" sounds and utterances and altering the levels of lighting.

Schuster and Gritton (1985, 54) maintain that the suggestive techniques used in Suggestopedia come closer to the type of suggestion used in commercial advertising than they do to hypnosis:

The difference is that suggestion in advertising attempts to persuade you to do something that you might ordinarily do anyhow; suggestion in hypnosis attempts to

compel you to do something that you ordinarily couldn't do. Carrying this to the extreme, if Suggestopedia is "hypnosis", then so is commercial advertising.

If suggestion is used beneficially in approaches such as medicine and dentistry, why is it regarded as harmful or dangerous in education? Without using the words "suggestion" or "hypnosis", Ginott (1985, 23) points out that the teacher sets up a "mood-context" for every lesson:

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized.

Suggestopedia makes us aware of the power of our suggestions- both verbal and non-verbal. Lozanov (1978, 201) defines "suggestion" as "...a constant communicative factor" and does not propose bombarding students with obvious verbal suggestions like "Learning is fun". Rather, teachers must demonstrate that learning is fun, allow students to experience the fun for themselves, and suggest their expectations that students' learning efficiency will soar.

This is related to the placebo effect, the cause of which is not yet well understood. Encarta (2005) claims that one possible explanation is that "...the patient's faith in a cure may be related to the release of...endorphins, the body's natural opiates..." The following subsection, then, discusses the placebo effect in more detail and explores its connections with Suggestopedia.

3.1.2 *The Placebo Effect*

In his book *Persuasion and Healing*, Frank (1973) describes the placebo (Latin for "I shall please") effect, particularly within the context of the field of psychotherapy. In discussing religious healing at Lourdes (*Ibid.*, 66-67), he argues that, like shamanic rituals, this includes a preparatory period (a tiring journey), an evocative setting, bells, music, and ritual. His conclusion about Lourdes (*Ibid.*, 69) is that "...the great majority of the sick do

not experience a cure. However, most of the pilgrims seem to derive some psychological benefit from the experience.”

He concedes, though:

The evidence that an occasional cure of advanced organic disease does occur at Lourdes is as strong as that for any other phenomenon accepted as true...The piles of crutches attest to the fact that many achieve improved functioning, at least temporarily.

He goes on to discuss religious revivalism, “thought reform”, and a number of experimental studies of persuasion. He describes the placebo effect as follows:

Physicians have always known that their ability to inspire expectant trust in a patient partially determines the success of treatment... (They) may use a placebo rather than a sedative in treating a patient’s chronic insomnia to avoid the danger of addiction. Since a placebo is inert, its beneficial effects must lie in its symbolic power. The most likely supposition is that it gains its potency through being a tangible symbol of the physician’s role as healer. In our society, the physician validates his power by prescribing medication, just as a shaman in a primitive tribe may validate his by spitting out a bit of bloodstained down at the proper moment (*Ibid.*, 37-38).

Franks argues that, until the last few decades, most drugs prescribed by physicians were inert or actually even harmful. In a sense, then, physicians were prescribing placebos without actually realising they were doing so, and thus, the “...history of medical treatment until relatively recently is the history of the placebo effect” (*Ibid.*, 56).

Franks’ conclusion (*Ibid.*, 57) is that administering inert medications by physicians shows that...

...the alleviation of anxiety and arousal of hope through this means commonly produce considerably symptomatic relief and may promote healing of some types of tissue damage. The relief may be enduring. Although persons predisposed to trust others and to accept socially defined symbols of healing are most likely to respond favorably, the response seems to depend primarily on interactions between the patient’s momentary state and aspects of the immediate situation. Important among these are the attention and interest of the healer.

Miele (1982, 35) argues that “...the very organization of the Suggestopedia course is a form of placebo giving rise to expectations of easier learning”.

The following account of the genesis of the Lozanov method clearly shows the placebo effect in action. Hypnopaedia (or sleep-learning) had already been proposed as early as the forties and fifties (Leshan, 1942; Fox and Robbin, 1952).

According to the mythos of accelerated learning, it all started with Lozanov's sleep-learning experiments. He found that students who had material for the next day's foreign-language lesson played many times over a loudspeaker system while they slept performed much better than students without this sleep-learning experience. However, when some of the students' loudspeakers were accidentally turned off, they still performed as well as students who actually had the sleep-learning experience. That is, students who had no sleep-learning experience, but thought they had, performed as if they had had the experience. This and other experiments led Lozanov to develop his Suggestopedic method, first for foreign-language skills and then for subjects such as mathematics and the sciences (Zemke, 1995, 1).

One example of the placebo effect in the Suggestopedic classroom occurs in the first session when the teacher or principal heightens students' expectations by saying something about the "unique method" they are about to experience.

Besides the placebo effect, Suggestopedia also draws upon the Snowball and Rosenthal effects, which are more often discussed in pedagogical literature. I outline them now to persuade the aspirant Suggestopedic teacher to explore their use in the classroom.

3.1.3 *Snowball and Rosenthal¹² Effects*

One website ("Science Daily", 2005) describes the Snowball Effect as:

...present in any process that starts from an initial small state and builds upon itself, becoming larger and perhaps potentially dangerous or disastrous (a 'spiral of decline' or 'vicious circle') but might be beneficial (a virtuous circle, or often a self-fulfilling prophecy).

In Suggestopedia, the student's rapid progress fuels his optimism, thus increasing his motivation and consequently inspiring further progress.

In describing Lozanov's directive that students should recall a positive learning experience, Gold (2002, 1) explains:

¹² I am unable to trace the origins of the Snowball Effect, but the Rosenthal Effect is documented by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) and Brehm and Kassir (1996).

In recalling the enjoyable classroom situation - and people love hearkening back to situations where they felt good - the key phrases and expressions used or heard will, in all likelihood, spring to mind. Surprised by their newly discovered ability to remember spontaneously, students quickly develop more positive expectations of themselves and their learning capacities. Delighted by the ease with which they have mastered the subject matter, they will find their motivation and enthusiasm spiralling in accordance with the principle that "nothing succeeds like success".

The Rosenthal Effect is otherwise known as the "Pygmalion" (or "teacher expectancy") effect: one's expectations about a person can eventually lead that person to behave and achieve in ways that confirm those expectations, in other words, the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Dhority (1984, 4.8) relates how, before Lozanov, the Rosenthal Effect was evidence of how we as teachers (mostly unconsciously) determine the success or failure of our students:

We teachers, with the great authority we have been invested with: our voices, our eyes, our facial expressions, our body language, our enthusiasm or boredom, our capacity to foster an atmosphere of play and delight (or its opposite), our encouraging attitude or our withering critical *mien*, our joy or our mechanical routine—can literally create success or failure in our classrooms. To become conscious of the power we possess and take proper responsibility for it is at once a great challenge and an opportunity.

Lozanov's method aims to create an environment in which every element (including the expectations of the teacher) suggests success.

"Suggestopedia", then, studies suggestion in the learning environment and explores the relationship between the subconscious and learning. The following section extends upon this definition of the Lozanov method.

3.2 Defining "Suggestopedia"

"Suggestopedia" derives from "Suggestology", defined by Lozanov (Blair, 1982, 146) as:
...the comprehensive science of suggestion in all its aspects...It deals mainly with the possibilities of suggestion to tap man's reserve capabilities in the spheres of both mind and body. Consequently, it is the science of the accelerated harmonious development and self-control of man and his manifold talents.

In short, "Suggestology" is the study of the power of suggestion, whether verbal or non-verbal, conscious or unconscious (Schmid, 1985, 27). Lozanov's view is that "...suggestion coming from the total environment to the person in it plays a far more significant role in the daily lives of people than had been realized before" (Botha, 1990, 13), and he studied the influence of suggestion in psychotherapy, medicine, and education. He told an interviewer from *The Japan Times*:

I recall a patient 45 years ago responding so well to my [nonclinical] proposition that an operation would not hurt that he required no anaesthetic, felt no pain, and a year later had virtually no scar. This was not hypnosis; aware on a conscious level his subconscious was at work, allowing him to take the initiative. Long ago, I dismissed both Freud and hypnosis as producing negative byproducts. (Jeffs, 2000, 1)

Felix advises teachers to see "suggestion" with the same clinical neutrality demonstrated by Lozanov. Since suggestion is already present in any learning environment and teachers use it both consciously and paraconsciously, why not harness its full power, as Lozanov has done, by integrating it as a means for accelerating the progress of the student? Galisson (1983, 104,) argues:

I do not see how pedagogy (in general) could do without suggestion, when it is obvious that it constitutes an essential mode of interaction between human beings, and when it is in this capacity everywhere present in the school, which is par excellence a centre of socialising, and therefore of interaction. In short, suggestion in pedagogy is necessary; but surely not nothing but suggestion in pedagogy. (translated)

Lozanov identifies three barriers to suggestion: critical-logical, emotional, and ethical (Miele, 1982, 21-22) that allow us to reject material that violates our sense of logic, that fails to create feelings of security and confidence, and that violates our sense of right and wrong. When properly used, suggestion can overcome buried ideas implanted by social norms, such as the idea that learning is a serious, difficult and joyless business: "Let's go over this one more time to be sure that you have it in your head". Miele (1982, 22-23) argues:

A well-meaning teacher might say, "Today we're going to learn 200 words. You've been led to believe this isn't possible. In fact, it's easy. You'll see." Saying this confronts the first two suggestive barriers: logical and emotional. The underlying message is "You're *wrong*, this *is* possible; *brace* yourselves for a new self-concept."
A teacher trained in Suggestopedia would approach it differently. "Now let's learn how to check into a hotel in Paris. You already know many of the words, like "hotel"

and “baggage” and “taxi”. “Sa femme” means his wife, but you probably know that too. Now the first sentence, “Pierre et sa femme arrivent a l’hotel avec leur baggage”, means “Paul and his wife arrive at the hotel with their baggage.”

In a Suggestopedic class, this is the way new material is introduced- easily, gently, in the context of a story that follows the dramatic rules of fiction- *with no mention of the 200 words*. That comes at the end, with a triumphant “Look! We’ve learned 200 words today! We’re already speaking good French.”

This is the process of “desuggestion”, which aims at removing blockages to learning. Once blockages are removed, the student may “tap his reserves”, that is draw information from a deeper consciousness to supplement new information. Kindt and Yoshizumi (2004, 1) explain that, in this way,

...new information, like new vocabulary or a new phrase, is not...isolated.... It is related to prior experience and receives assistance in being internalized; it becomes an integrated part of the student's linguistic ability. By matching the meanings of new language units to a vast storehouse of conscious and unconscious associations, the ability to learn, seemingly, increases... Once the teacher has freed the student of these inhibiting barriers through de-suggestion, he or she can concentrate on giving positive, liberating suggestion...

Schuster and Gritton (1985, 6) explain that the Suggestopedic teacher’s first task is to create a favourable atmosphere prior to presenting the didactic material. He does this by combining his “...composure, expectations and statements with a totally positive attitude”.

Kindt and Yoshizumi (2004, 1) explain that a Suggestopedic teacher would never show shock or surprise if a student who normally does poorly on a quiz suddenly does well:

The student would be praised and encouraged to continue such fine efforts. Students coming from a conservative, traditional teaching method find the seeming free-wheeling style... shocking. Adjustment, however, is quick, and students soon gain confidence in their teacher, fellow classmates, and themselves. Barrier-breaking, therefore, is as important as the suggestion itself.

Miele (1982, 33) explains that the underlying suggestion of advertising is “Buy and consume and thereby satisfy your deepest needs”. He says that Suggestopedia uses suggestion for vastly different purposes. Instead of selling us problems and products, it “sells” us achievement and a better, more realistic view of ourselves.

In short, Suggestopedia is based on the premise that the human brain has a relatively unlimited potential and is under-utilised. In order to optimise learning, Suggestopedia aims

at the simultaneous integration of brain function and the orchestration of conscious and unconscious factors in the learning environment (van der Vyver and Botha, 1989, 23).

Lozanov describes Suggestopedia thus:

Our theory is based on this, more or less: we subconsciously receive signals from all over the world, suggestive, not rational, not conscious....In normal life, these psychological, subconscious influences come to us unorganized....We (in Suggestopedia) are coordinating these unconscious, more or less unconscious and emotional signals, and at the same time we would like to free people from negative suggestions, to activate reserves of the mind. The Suggestopedic system is organized on this basis. Of course, this is not all there is to it. (Miele, 1982, 19)

Elsewhere, Lozanov (1978a, 225) claims “Suggestopedy” is:

The global approach to personality, the “volumely” (not linearly) organized instruction, the simultaneous utilization and activation of the conscious and paraconscious functions, the simultaneous participation of man’s mental and emotional sides, the simultaneous participation of the left and right hemispheres of the brain, as well as that of the cortex and sub-cortex- all these are of great importance for the global and many-sided influence of Suggestopedy over the personality.

It has taken me some years to understand what Lozanov means by “‘volumely’ (not linearly) organized instruction”. Rather than divide our learning material into carefully graded linear units, gradually becoming more and more difficult, I think he is suggesting that we should provide a “bigger picture” for the brains of our students and allow them to recognize and analyse the patterns they find. Miele (1982, 20) argues that Suggestopedia’s attempt at “...activation of the conscious and paraconscious functions” is achieved through attempting to orchestrate all the visual, auditory, physical, internal, and external stimuli usually vying for attention in the traditional classroom. He claims that Suggestopedia “...does not *fully* achieve this but succeeds enough to produce extraordinary results” (his italics). The goal, he argues, is to use the whole brain towards one purpose.

Pollack (1976, 97) defines Suggestopedia as:

(A) system of instruction aimed at improving man’s memory; but it is also a system which stimulates intellectual activity, raises the emotional tone, improves the socio-psychological coherence, and has a favorable effect on the whole personality of the student.

Schuster and Gritton (1985, 1) describe the method of the S.A.L.T. approach (Suggestive-Accelerative Learning Techniques, an “American synthesis” of the Lozanov procedure) as using...

...aspects of suggestion similar to advertising and unusual styles of presenting material to accelerate classroom learning. The essence of this method is... an unusual combination of physical relaxation exercises, mental concentration, and suggestive principles to strengthen a person’s ego and expand his or her memory capabilities plus relaxing music while material to be learned is presented dynamically.

Gold (2002, 1) claims that Suggestopedia...

...focuses on activating the reserve capacities of the unconscious mind. This system enables most students to learn three times as fast as before, largely because they feel safe, are highly stimulated, and find themselves in a “flow state”. This highly desirable form of concentration eliminates almost all outside interference, and learning seems to take place through instant osmosis. This “flow state” seems to come about most easily when students are given tasks that require about 120% of their normal maximum capacity.

Perhaps this “in-the-moment”, Zen-like “flow state” is what Lozanov (1978a, 258) calls “concentrative psychorelaxation”: the optimal state of brain activity for learning in which the level of relaxation is neither too deep nor too shallow. Hagiwara (1993, 5) explains that “...the teacher needs to create and arrange different styles of activities to stimulate the students’ minds in various ways so that each student has a chance to achieve this state of concentrative psychorelaxation”.

Suggestopedia claims to release students’ minds from the existing framework of the “social-suggestive norms” (Lozanov, 1978a, 252): perceived limits to students’ abilities deriving from “common sense”, such as “No-one can remember all that”. Suggestopedia sees these negative suggestions as inhibiting human potential and believes teachers can free their students’ natural potential by replacing existing negative suggestions from the social milieu with positive suggestions in order to liberate students from conditioned ideas about themselves that hinder progress. This is called the “desuggestive-suggestive process” (*Ibid.*, 253).

Lozanov calls one such negative pattern of beliefs “school neurosis” or “dydactogeny”, which he defines as “...illness or suppression of the development of children due to the

teacher's tactless approach" (*Ibid.*, 253). Interestingly, in distinguishing between overt and covert dydactogeny, he explains that, in the case of the latter, educational authority figures suggest to students that learning is not easy and that it takes a great deal of (often unpleasant) work. Such negative beliefs are ubiquitous: my friend downstairs assumed automatically that the hours I am spending writing this dissertation are boring and painful.

Gold (2002, 1) claims that Suggestopedia "...stems from a new vision of learning" in that it organizes material in such a way that the brain can remember spontaneously and integrate effectively. In addition, he claims that it "...redefines the speed and depth at which learning is possible" and that the more satisfying and enjoyable an experience is, the more thoroughly it will be remembered.

He adds that the future might require a total redefinition of the teacher's job description:

Teachers would have to give up the flattering self-image of being experts in their subjects and take on the more challenging role of being specialists in communication. Teaching, after all, entails the successful transferring of skills and understanding to others. For this reason, teachers find themselves in a peculiar paradox: they are totally dependent on their students' ability to learn, since if nobody is learning, then nobody has been doing any real teaching! In order to provide effective teaching, teachers would have to learn about the human brain, its different memory systems and the different "learning styles" students can have. They would have to become skilled at "packaging" knowledge and presenting it in a way that is meaningful to very different types of learners. Ideally, teachers would instil positive emotional associations with everything they teach and present their material both directly and indirectly. This is crucial to success, since our long-term memory best retains information that has been emotionally charged and perceived only through "the corner of the eye".

If the Suggestopedic teacher is to be a specialist in communication, Lozanov's formal "Principles of Suggestopedia" provide a useful summary of the key components necessary in order to optimize the presentation of information, foster the correct teacher assumptions and expectations, and create an environment conducive to efficient and rapid learning. I discuss these principles in the following section.

3.3 The Principles of Suggestopedia

I discuss these here in order to provide a comprehensive overview of “classical” Suggestopedia before I describe the process itself and, later, outline my own adaptations of the method.

Originally, Lozanov (1971) conceived six such “principles” but later (Lozanov, 1978a) chose to refine, simplify and condense the list into only three central ideas. The revised list is valuable because it shows Lozanov’s evolution of thought, but both lists contain ideas worthy of contemplation by any teacher.

3.3.1 *Lozanov’s original six principles*

Lozanov’s (1971) original six principles of “unconscious mental reactions” as he conceived them in his doctoral thesis are:

3.3.1.1 *Authority*

“Authority” is Lozanov’s (1978a, 187) term for what he calls “...the non-directive prestige which by indirect ways creates an atmosphere of confidence and intuitive desire to follow the set example.” Bancroft (1976, 202) stresses that this is not authoritativeness based on bribery, pedantry, haughtiness, or repression. Rather, students must be confident in the ability of their teacher, who must never paraconsciously contradict his verbal messages. He must bear “...an air of confidence in speech, gesture, dress, and manner” (Kindt and Yoshizumi, 2004, 1). Authority is also conferred by the use of great artworks, “classical” music, and clever poetry or prose. Schmid (1985, 4) notes that the “air” of the Suggestopedic teacher “...inspires respect, trust and intentiveness, without fear, suppression, or social distance”.

Miele (1982, 37) claims that the teacher gains authority through another of Lozanov’s six principles (often known in the West as *Dual Planeness*):

3.3.1.2 *Double Planeness*

This term is used to explain how classroom communication takes place on two planes: the conscious, verbal level and the paraconscious, non-verbal level (Botha, 1990, 49). Lozanov (1978a, 193) defines “double planeness” as “...the enormous signalling stream of diverse stimuli that unconsciously or semiconsciously are emitted from or perceived by the personality.” The Suggestopedic teacher aims at congruency between the verbal plane and the paraconscious plane. He might be especially aware of what is suggested by what is not said.

Botha (1990, 49) explains that the term “double planeness” refers to “...intuitive impressions influencing our attitudes towards persons and situations incomprehensible even to ourselves” and that these impressions come “...not only from the people involved in the communicative act but also from the décor like lighting and colour which can also have an effect.” The harmony between conscious and paraconscious perception is vital in Suggestopedia; students should not receive conflicting information from one or the other.

3.3.1.3 *Infantilization*

This potentially misleading term does not imply childish behaviour. Rather, Lozanov means that students “...become as susceptible to learning as children” (Kindt and Yoshizumi, 2004, 1), that is develop a child-like openness:

Children take in information effortlessly and naturally. They learn with their whole beings. Their world is filled with wonder and fabulous, deep emotions. They learn the names of food and kitchen items as they eat, verbs of action as they play, and so on. Lozanov believes that given the right environment, even older adults can regain some of that infant-like openness.

Miele (1982, 7) calls it: “(a)n attitude of confidence and uncritical, playful spontaneity. This is not childish and not regressive, but the child-like attitude Christ had when he said ‘Become as little children’”.

Students who find the “authority” of the teacher convincing find it easier to “let go”. Lozanov (1978a, 192) claims that infantilization creates an atmosphere of “...easiness, spontaneity, and absence of pressure.” Miele (1982, 27) calls it an attitude that is “...child-like, spontaneous, confident, and open”. Botha (1990, 49) explains: “The vital goal of infantilization is to make it possible for the student to be as receptive as a small child exploring and discovering his world and to absorb...huge volumes of information...with apparent ease and joy.”

To achieve this receptive mode, the Suggestopedic teacher uses role-playing, songs, games, physical exercises, and drawing. Rose (1985, 90) describes one of Lozanov’s games involving the teacher tossing a ball at the students and asking a question while the ball is in the air. The students, not knowing to whom the ball will be tossed next, are simultaneously alert, having fun, and learning. Miele (1982, 27) stresses, however, that humour and games should be found in the subject. Setting aside time for play as a relief from the “laborious” work sends out a negative message and simply raises the barriers to suggestion.

3.3.1.4 *Intonation*

Lozanov experimented with the use of different intonations in the reading of the texts in his foreign language classes. Dhority (1984, 5.3) stresses that intonation is a “...clear window into ... inner state, attitudes and values”. Miele (1982, 29) reports how Lozanov told the UNESCO Conference that there is no such thing as a neutral intonation. Dhority (1984, 5.3–5.4) claims that:

Just as we can acknowledge and almost embrace others with our eyes, so we can do the same with the quality of our voices. Our voice intonation says much that is deeper than the words we speak. Voice tone is largely expressed and received subconsciously. As we become more conscious of our behavior, we can begin to align this powerful vehicle of suggestive expression with our best intentions....I walk into class greeting students individually (as is practically appropriate) in a tone which expresses the pleasure I am having in seeing them and in being there to begin the class. Of course, it is counterproductive to feign such pleasure since the students will almost surely detect the falseness, at least subconsciously...My voice intonation continues to be a remarkably clear window into my inner state, attitudes and values throughout the class. If I am truly aligned with my best intentions and purpose, my voice intonation will express this alignment.

The teacher's intonation, then, should reflect calm and confidence.

3.3.1.5 *Rhythm*

Rhythm and melody explain why we can remember the lyrics to pop songs we have not heard for years. Caskey (1980, 41) claims that music and rhythm "...assist in bilateral input of material".

Bancroft (1978, 152-157) describes how, during her visit to Bulgaria in 1971, two versions of the Suggestopedic concert sessions were performed. In the demonstration to East-European delegates, a very precise rhythm was used in the speaking of the texts. The session included "...lyrical and rhythmic music, an artistic and rhythmic rendering of the text, deep breathing, and a meditative state". Western delegates were offered non-rhythmic music with the texts read over slow Baroque movements¹³. Botha (1990, 51) concludes that: "...it appears that a precise rhythm played a critical role and that the Bulgarians were anxious to conceal this...from the West." Miele (1982, 31) tells the story of a meeting with Lozanov:

When I dined with Lozanov at a Washington restaurant, disco music was bruising the air with a beat I could almost feel in my breastbone. I asked Dr Lozanov what effect he thought this rhythm might have. "It makes digestion more difficult," he said. "I rather like it. Do you think in my case it eases digestion?" "Our reactions are basically alike. No soldier is sent into a fighting frenzy by Mozart. No one is led into a quiet reflection by a military march, even though some like it. This music," he said with distaste, "hurts your digestion too. Not as much as mine."

A list of suggested musical pieces is reproduced in Appendix A.

3.3.1.6 *Concert-Pseudopassivity*

Lozanov's method for the teaching of foreign languages contains the unique "concert sessions" designed to create a stress-free environment, initiate both conscious and

¹³ Suggestopedia draws some of its "authority" from the Western "classical" music played during the Concert sessions. Further research could explore what equivalent music would confer "authority" in modern South Africa.

paraconscious participation, and release memory's "reserve potentials" in the process (Botha, 1990, 54-56). During the second concert session, students appear totally relaxed and do not appear to be concentrating at all. The paraconscious levels of awareness, however, are in theory active.

In monitoring his students' brain waves during lessons, Lozanov (1978a, 237-238) demonstrates a relationship between the use of baroque music in the classroom and the number of students whose brain waves reach the alpha state. Botha (1990, 34) explains, however, that the alpha state on its own is not responsible for hypermnesia. Rather, he claims, only a situation in which all the suggestive elements are orchestrated harmoniously seem(s) to create the right suggestive atmosphere in which hypermnesia can take place.

3.3.2 *Lozanov's Revised Three Principles*

After the publication of his thesis *Suggestologija*, Lozanov (1978a) decided to condense or simplify the original six principles to only the following three principles (Botha, 1990, 43-49), which are worth knowing because they sum up Lozanov's methodology more elegantly and succinctly than the original list.

3.3.2.1 *Joy*

Lozanov's first (revised) principle advocates joyful, free, and relaxed learning conditions in a warm and supportive environment. The Suggestopedic teacher aims to orchestrate all the elements in the learning environment to promote relaxed and joyful learning similar to the way in which young children learn. Learning is easier and quicker in an environment filled with positive emotions. Because competitions create losers as well as winners, the Suggestopedic teacher plays down the use of competition and instead tries to promote cooperation.

3.3.2.2 *Global Participation of the Brain*

To maximize learning, Suggestopedia aims at communicating with both analytical and emotional brain, conscious and unconscious. A Suggestopedic teacher, consequently, provides "...massive, varied, and rich input" (Botha, 1990, 62) and "desuggests" the idea that only small amounts of material can be understood at a time due to innate limitations. Students "...naturally select data that is easy for them to learn and of real interest" (Kindt and Yoshizumi, 2004, 1).

Suggestopedia provides a "big picture". Lozanov (1978a, 195) says: "We give the material globally in deductive units. We stimulate the personality globally. We create a communicative global process of instruction."

Lozanov's methodology is the only educational process I am aware of that, like the advertising industry, takes advantage of the power of the visual image, the catchiness of a beat and a melody, and the efficacy of repeated exposure in different forms. Does this "global" participation of the brain also imply using both left and right hemispheres?

Prichard and Taylor (1980, 129) argue that:

In the Lozanov method, deliberately structured relaxed states provide opportunities for the same brain frequencies to be generated on both sides of the brain. It is hypothesized that one of the reasons for the effectiveness of his approach lies in invoking the use of the intuitive faculties (a feel for patterns of information characteristic of the right hemisphere) in verbal learning (characteristic of the left).

Hart (1983, 27) explains how:

Since the brain is indisputably a multipath, multimodal apparatus, the notion of mandatory sequences, or even of any fixed sequences, is unsupportable. Each of us learns in personal, highly individual, mainly random ways...That being the case, any group instruction that has been tightly, logically planned will have been wrongly planned for most of the group, and will inevitably inhibit, prevent, or distort learning.

Hart is not advocating a lack of planning or structure but rather encouraging teachers to create an environment filled with the varied and massive stimuli upon which the brain

thrives: the brain detects patterns and develops "...sophisticated programs for responding to them" (Dhority, 1983, 1-2).

Lozanov (1978a, 251) states: "...in no case does the brain function only with its cortex structures, or only with the subcortex, or with only the right or the left hemisphere. The functional unity of the brain is unbreakable no matter that in some cases one activity or another comes to the fore".

Botha (1990, 35) argues that Suggestopedia aims at both left and right hemispheres, allows "...analytical and synthetic activities (to) take place simultaneously", and facilitates communication on both "...conscious and paraconscious levels". Schuster and Gritton (1985, 20) explain how "(t)he lesson must be globalized and presented as an integrated package".

One way to inspire the global participation of the brain is to use artistic means. Racle (1979, 134) argues that, because the arts are so rich in suggestion, they are the highest form of suggestion. Lozanov (1978a, 262) claims that exposure to art forms leads to immediate assimilation of material without any conscious effort. He demonstrates this (*Ibid.*, 264) by presenting unobtrusive English material peripherally during a musical performance with 32% retention the following day.

Hagiwara (1993, 7) claims that "Suggestopedia introduces rich artistic elements into its teaching methodology and materials to stimulate learners' creativity: almost all the arts are included. The teacher uses songs in the elaborations ("Activations") and as background music in the concert sessions. He hangs colourful grammar posters (mostly created by the students) among other art posters and sometimes invites students to complete drawing tasks. Hagiwara (*Ibid.*) claims: "You move like an actor in the theater, use puppets like a show person, and read the textbook like a poet at his recital".

Gateva (1991, 222-226), Lozanov's associate and life partner, argues that contrast is the root of all artistic composition and that we should capitalise on its use in the classroom as it creates expectancy, surprise, and arouses the interest of students. She suggests that we perceive the human voice as a further art form for use in the classroom.

3.3.2.3 *The Suggestive Link*

Botha (1990, 46) describes the suggestive link as "...the reconstruction of the process of instruction in such a way that mutual relations are created: a suggestive inter-relation between the teacher and the students...as well as amongst the students..." He goes on to list six characteristics of this suggestive link:

- A positive and supportive attitude
- Trust and positive expectations in relation to the students' abilities
- Total absence of destructive criticism
- De-emphasis of errors
- Encouragement of active participation in communicative acts
- Trust in the ability of the teacher

As in the original principle of authority, Lozanov does not wish to create authoritarian teachers. Rather, he wishes to develop what Botha (1990, 87) calls "trustworthy authoritativeness".

The teacher is the "...motor of the Suggestopedic machine" (Gateva, 1990, 91) and is trained to be sensitive to the physical environment, possible subliminal messages (Scovel, 1979), and non-verbal cues such as eye contact, facial expressions, and body language.

Echoing McLuhan (1966), Dhority (1985, 12) argues:

The medium is inseparable from the message: as teachers we are embodyers, vehicles, channels for what we communicate. Teachers either serve to reinforce or help students transcend self-limiting attitudes and beliefs. Thus, the Suggestopedic teacher's attitude must at all times be positive. The teacher is responsible for creating a relaxing, pleasant, and stimulating learning centre in which all information has a strong and positive emotional content, thus helping students to create networks of pleasurable associations with the new material and consequently internalize it more strongly. Even a simple grammar exercise or self-correcting test should contain positive affirmations: "That blue shirt looks beautiful."

Lozanov's revised principles provide the teacher with a "big picture": joy, global brain participation, and a particular teacher-student relationship provide a solid attitudinal foundation. In order to facilitate deep and quick learning, Suggestopedia presents information in the classroom in a very specific way. The following section describes the Suggestopedic teaching cycle and the classroom.

3.4 The Suggestopedic Classroom and Cycle

Lozanov's classroom, textbook, and specific cycle are unique. Together, they present the brain with variety and stimulation and facilitate efficient learning. I suggest that any teacher may find valuable ideas in the "Suggestopedic Cycle", classroom, and textbook as I describe them below.

Before I describe the three phases of Lozanov's pedagogical cycle, however, it is appropriate that I describe the Suggestopedic classroom (with its unique "peripheral" stimulation) and the textbook.

3.4.1 The Learning Environment

Atkisson (1991, 1) explains how, on a trip to India in the early 1960's, Lozanov observed monks at work and noted that the environment suggested silence, observation, and relaxation. Similarly, he argues, the Suggestopedic environment invites learning:

It isn't that the teacher says "We're going to learn about the subjunctive now." Instead, the classroom is set up to invite you to learn the subjunctive. The posters on the walls, the colors, the textures, the way the seats are arranged, perhaps even the way the teacher is dressed, all make a difference. Are the books on your desk when you come into the classroom? Or does the teacher give you the book, have eye contact with you, and perhaps even smile as she does so? All of those things - which are quite magical in kindergarten - bring that quality of joy to the classroom throughout life-long learning... (Atkisson, 1991, 1)

Kindt and Yoshizumi (2004, 1) hold that "The environment is the first thing we encounter as we come together to learn. How we perceive the surroundings and the atmosphere will have everything to do with the success of our learning."

The classic Suggestopedic classroom, to avoid negative associations with regular classrooms, has a congenial, homely, lounge- or club-like appearance: twelve or fourteen comfortable upholstered reclining armchairs¹⁴ in a semi-circle, peripheral language posters, art reproductions, and posters of landscapes, bridges, and suns to suggest openness, meaningful relations, and warmth. Travel posters will later be seen to be related directly to the text. Flowers and plants add to the attractiveness of the room. Everyone sits at the same level, and nothing should come between the teacher and the students, not even small pieces of furniture. For written work, students use clipboards rather than desks. The carpeted room is large and bright and has windows and natural daylight. The teacher sits in the armchair at the open part of the semi-circle. Behind or beside him are a flipchart and a small table with stereo equipment.

A Suggestopedic classroom does not display posters of bullfights, wrestlers, or horror films. But classroom décor is an essential element for success, and the following section describes Lozanov's unique "peripheral" visual material.

3.4.2 *Peripheral Perception*

Part of Lozanov's genius is his educational use of techniques exploited so successfully by the advertising industry. Classroom decorations constitute a powerful way in which teachers can help students tap the resources of their mental reserves: this is the careful programming of what they will perceive on a paraconscious level (that is what they will see without realising they have seen it). Gold (2002, 1) explains:

This sort of information of weak intensity is constantly slipping into our minds without our realising it, at speeds our cognitive processes could never keep up with. Our attitudes toward people, subjects, and things are largely determined by these subliminal perceptions that find their way directly to our unconscious minds. For example, an otherwise perfectly convincing sales pitch by a life-insurance salesman

¹⁴ Taking pains to eschew any association with Mesmerism, Hagiwara (1998) denies this by claiming that the Suggestopedia classroom uses a central round table and ordinary chairs rather than reclining chairs.

could fall flat because, at the moment he is 'moving in for the kill' with a sob story about his poor mother who was left destitute, the prospective customer catches him furtively glancing at his watch. In the event that the salesman is experienced, his glance might be so quick, and thus so barely perceptible, that it would not be consciously recognised by the customer until several hours later. During this time of "incubation", the customer may well feel uncomfortable and distrustful without knowing why.

The Suggestopedic teacher must pay a take a great deal of trouble to "package" systematically the material for the "peripheral" level of perception. He is the architect of an optimal learning environment. Gold (2002, 1) claims that because the "subsensorial" or "subliminal" bypass our consciousness, data entering through this channel activate long-term memory, which "...retains what it has experienced indirectly":

Information perceived subliminally thus follows a trajectory unlike that of direct information. The latter passes through the filters of our conscious and rational mind, soliciting our attention and short-term memory, remaining at our disposal for about three days before starting to fade away, thereby making room for more recent input that must be dealt with....The teacher's task is to bring about a tension-free and joyful atmosphere where everything is taught, simultaneously, in its entirety and in its constituent elements, hence complying with the functioning of our mental processes. As described above, these processes are the result of an inseparable link between the conscious analytical functions of the mind and the unconscious synthetic ones.

Du Preez and Naude (1985, 52) show how enormous quantities of information can be assimilated using subsensory techniques and activated when the attention is defocused. In Suggestopedia, students are exposed to material on the walls and during the second concert that is subsensorily assimilated. Later, that information is released from the subconscious by defocusing the attention, for example by playing games such as ball throwing or acting out scenes. In foreign language classes, students concentrate on the meaning of the text as a whole, but individual words and grammatical structures appear on posters on the wall, are sometimes not referred to, and are allowed to remain on the periphery of students' attention. Lozanov demonstrated that "superluminal" instruction can stimulate the brain's right hemisphere thus significantly increasing learning efficiency and improving information retention (Zemke, 1995, 1).

This is potentially a very exciting insight, particularly in the South African multilingual classroom. If we can “accelerate” learning while we have a backlog of illiteracy, why are we not harnessing this powerful methodology?

3.4.3 *The Text*

The (foreign language) textbook is unique. The page is split into two columns: the target language on the right and a mother-tongue translation on the left- in the “peripheral vision” of the student. Gold (2002, 1) claims:

This layout is the result of perceptual research findings, according to which the human eye - at least in countries where people read from left to right - has a tendency to focus on the right-hand side of the page. Consequently, with this layout students can at any time have recourse to the translation, but naturally “gravitate” toward the language being learned.

The course consists of a dramatic storyline split into a number of “episodes”, the rationale being that dramatic stories are more easily remembered. Cleverly embedded in the story are the high frequency phrases normally taught in foreign language classes, but here they are in an interesting dramatic context. The drama adds an emotional dimension to the learning process and thus “colours” the information for efficient recall later. Atkisson (1991, 1) explains:

It's more interesting for the pupils - is Pedro going to fall in love with Helen? And what's going to happen on his trip to Washington? Meanwhile, the students are learning vocabulary about giving directions as well as descriptive adjectives and complex verb forms, but they don't know it! We slip it in through the back door.

The text is preferably written by the teacher himself. The dialogues are long enough to suggest to students the teacher’s confidence in their ability to tap their reserves, a “...perfect example of a positive suggestion, which, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, inevitably bears itself out” (Gold, 2002, 1). The text may present twelve characters so that each member of the learning group may be associated with one of the characters. Rose (1985, 33) points out that the pictures in the textbook are expertly drawn because “...art aids suggestion”.

When I studied Suggestopedia under Uti Bodenstein at Stellenbosch University in 1998, each of us in the class had to produce a complete course including such a dramatic text for the language we were teaching. Still on my bookshelf is my own U.K.-themed effort: *The Power of Tea*, a sample of which can be found overleaf¹⁵ (Figure 2).

Having described the basic principles, classroom, and textbook, I move on to describe the learning cycle itself. I outline now Lozanov's Suggestopedic cycle, which first introduces students to the new information and then "activates" this information.

3.4.4 *The Suggestopedic Cycle*

This is divided into "Pre-Session", "Concert", and "Activations" phases.

3.4.4.1 *The Pre-Session Phase*

In the "Pre-Session Phase", students are "...familiarized with the new material and at the same time a very positive suggestive set-up must be created" (Botha, 1990, 48). Students are welcomed, their learning expectations are raised, and something is said about the unique method. The idea is to raise students' levels of curiosity and anticipation to ready them for the learning process ahead. In this session, the teacher should "...refrain from lecturing, but rather give some global insight into the material" (*Ibid*, 49). The suggestion should be that learning is easy and fun. The goal of this first phase is to "...de-suggest the idea that... (the student's) ability is limited" (Rose, 1985, 13).

¹⁵ Further examples can be found in Appendix B.

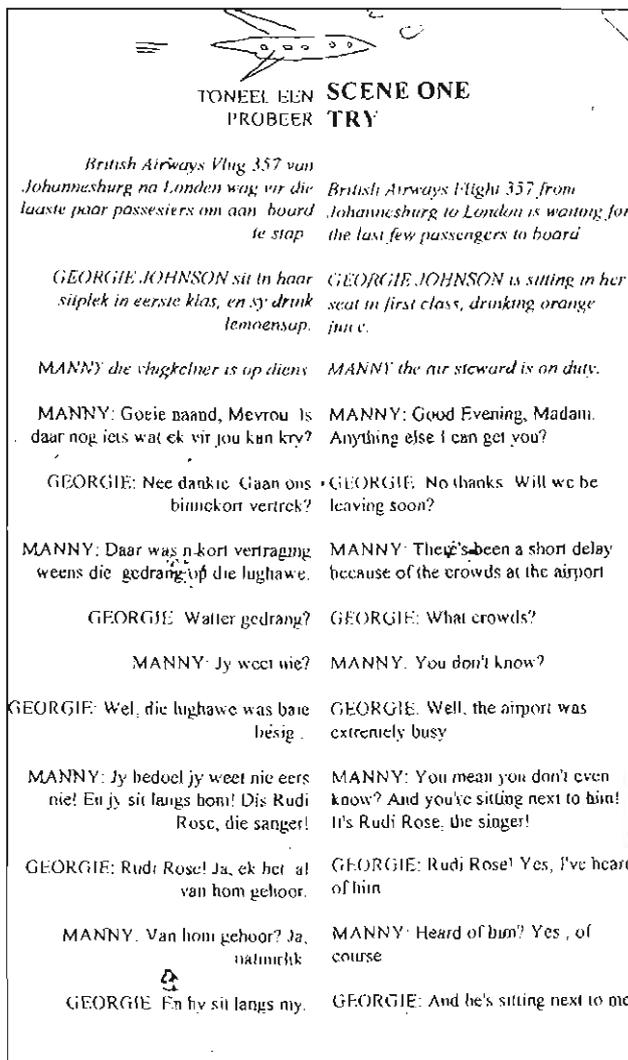


Figure 2. Extract from *The Power of Tea*

Music may be playing as students enter, or the teacher may facilitate relaxation exercises or remind students how well they did in the previous session.

Typically, students are greeted by name as they enter. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher distributes copies of the dialogue about to be presented "...as if these were deeply meaningful gifts" (Gold, 2002, 1). Indeed, the Suggestopedic teacher is urged to pay attention to the details when preparing such texts in order to suggest the quality and importance of the material. LeHecka (2004, 1) says that Suggestopedia demands...

...artistic professionalism and special preparation on the part of the teachers in the introduction of the new educational context as well as in the development of all of the teaching materials... practitioners must truly think of themselves as artists whose job it is to orchestrate the learning environment.

3.4.4.2 *The Concert Phases*

In the second phase, the “Session Phase”, the teacher presents two “Concerts” during which the material to be learned is presented accompanied by music. First, the teacher becomes quiet and solemn, and the students follow suit (Miele, 1982, 20). Next, a piece of dramatic orchestral music is played, for example a classical or Romantic work by Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, or Chopin¹⁶, and, after a few minutes, the teacher reads the text slowly as though it is part of the music. The teacher’s voice follows the dynamics, tempo, emotion, rhythm, pitch, emotional quality, and cadence of the music. He reads the text as if paying no attention to the meaning (Botha, 1990, 15) but rather “...as if his... voice were one of the instruments in the orchestra” (Gold, 2002, 1). At times, his voice might be loud and commanding; at other times he may whisper. Pauses allow students to refer to the translation if necessary.

After a short break, all texts are put aside, and the teacher presents the “Passive” (or “Receptive”) Concert, during which slow movements of Baroque compositions¹⁷ are played. In this Concert, “...the music becomes the dominant factor and the words of the...text are only just audible to the conscious mind” (Rose, 1985, 63). Students are instructed to relax, close their eyes, and concentrate on the music. Kline (1976, 24) explains that the purpose of the Receptive Concert is to “...give you a familiarity with speech as normally used in the language you are studying- its patterns and natural rhythms. You are relaxed, and the music creates an ideal mental state (alpha) for an effortless

¹⁶ This raises obvious questions about Eurocentrism. But as the main criteria appear to be tempo and rhythm, there is no reason why further research should not explore the use of African music in the Suggestopedic classroom.

¹⁷ Again denying an hypnotic effect, Hagiwara (1998, 1) disagrees, claiming that Suggestopedia never uses a “slow baroque” or a music piece written as “adagio” because Suggestopedia does not want students to fall asleep in the concert session. Rather, he says, it uses faster and livelier pieces to stimulate the whole brain.

absorption of the material.” Kindt and Yoshizumi (2004, 1) explain how the teacher reads the text in a natural, yet well enunciated voice:

Emphasis for the students is on relaxation and visualization. As the students know the story well (they read it in Japanese), they are able to imagine the situation. As they recognize English words, pictures form in their minds, making the chapter come alive. Complete retention is obviously not perfect, but students have often been amazed when words or phrases will suddenly pop into their minds weeks or even months later.

Miele (1982, 52) says that someone looking into a room in which a Second Concert is in progress...

...would hardly suspect that vast reserves of learning were being tapped, that the right and left hemispheres of the students' neocortex(es) and their limbic systems were being brought into purposeful cooperation so that learning becomes effortless, joyful, and amazingly efficient.

In just listening to the teacher's voice and picturing the scene in their imaginations, the students “solidify” the meaning of the material to be learnt (Atkisson, 1991, 1).

After the Second Concert, students leave quietly without talking to the teacher, supposedly to allow the words of the text to “...echo in their minds” (Gold, 2002, 1).

3.4.4.3 *Activations (“Elaborations”)*

The day after the Concert Sessions, the teacher presents a series of “Activations”: a quick-moving succession of role plays, stories, songs, jokes, playful contests, plays, puzzles, and games, all with clear links to the texts being “studied” and designed to revise the vocabulary learned in the Concerts.

Gold (2002, 1) explains how, during the “activations”, each word and grammatical structure used in the dramatic text is made “unforgettable” through specifically chosen historical explanations and entertaining stories. Students may enact dramatic presentations of the text and practise them until they reach some level of mastery. For example, if the hero of the story enters an hotel, students might undertake an activity related to making a reservation, talking in the coffee shop, or conversing with the concierge.

The activities change every five minutes,...

...with each one flowering into the next one, in a seamless succession of information-filled fun, designed to appeal - for different reasons - to learners of every conceivable learning style. (In fact, the very concept underlying each activity is that it must contain visual, auditory and kinaesthetic components to make sure that every learner is able to learn the way she, or he, likes to learn best.). (Gold, 2002, 1)

Atkisson (1991) explains:

Well, it's new and it's not new. What's new about it is that... we use all of these elements consistently, versus using them once in a while when the pupils are getting antsy. Foreign language teachers are famous for playing games with their pupils - but do they always play games? And are the games both affective and effective in nature - that is, do they make a positive psychological impact while getting the information across?... (P)lay one game every day in class that has an affective and an effective purpose to it. Just one! Get the pupils involved so that they are using all of their sensory modalities instead of just doing logical, sequential, and linguistic forms of learning.

Students are given carefully selected names and identities (for example, **Deejay Steve** from **Edenvale**) allowing them to be immersed in the new language and its culture. As Kindt and Yoshizumi (2004, 1) explain, the classroom becomes a movie set, the teacher is the director, and the students are players. As students are "acting", fear of mistakes is minimized; the character is erring, not the student.

The imaginative games enrich the written information with physical movement, positive emotions, and colour. During these "activations", indirect correction techniques emphasize how intelligent each mistake made by students has been rather than stressing its inaccuracy: "That's a clever answer. Japanese people usually say...." The lesson may end with a self-correcting quiz.

Atkisson (1991, 1) claims that Suggestopedia inspires natural curiosity about the subject:

But instead of dictating a lesson on grammar, the teacher is role-playing, or playing games, or singing songs, and embedded within that material is the grammar. Eventually the pupil will say, "You know, I really can't wait to do some more of this subjunctive tense stuff because it allows me to express myself better in Spanish. Can you please give me some more of those rules so I'll get it right?" You don't get that in other classes.

Of the effects of a Suggestopedic course, Miele (1982, 128) claims:

(S)tudents I spoke with were amazed to hear themselves using foreign words they were unaware of knowing: “There were times when it seemed like I was remembering some of the language not learning it.” New material is thus smuggled into the mind and later, when it is taught at a level of full awareness, it seems mysteriously familiar.

I hope that the foregoing sections have provided the reader with a thorough knowledge of the Suggestopedic “attitude”, classroom, textbook, and cycle. In the following section, I review briefly some of the studies already conducted on the use of Suggestopedic methodology.

3.5 Research

The effectiveness of Suggestopedia has been supported by a number of studies, both experimental and non-experimental, Western and non-Western, and in a variety of disciplines. This section summarizes certain salient studies both abroad and in South Africa.

In researching the effect of imagery and baroque music on vocabulary retention, Stein, Hardy, and Totten (1982) demonstrate that music together with visualisation appears more effective than music alone for long-term retention. In exploring the effects of relaxation training and music upon creativity, Gamble, Gamble, Parr and Caskey (1982) show that relaxation together with music is more effective than music alone. In studying the effects of a suggestive learning climate, synchronised breathing, and music on the learning and retention of Spanish words, Bordon and Schuster (1976) show that elements of suggestion, synchronisation, and music interact cumulatively with each other so that learning is best when all elements are part of the methodology.

In his book *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedy*, Lozanov (1978a) claims a 67% correct recall a year after his original series of lessons, more than three times the 20%

expected according to the Ebbinghaus curve of forgetting¹⁸ (Rose, 1985). In an article in *Training* magazine, Zemke (1995) claims that Lozanov showed he had boosted learning efficiency, increased information retention significantly over time, and enhanced the activity in the brain's right hemisphere, thereby dramatically increasing the amount of material that could be covered in a given time. A working group from UNESCO declared Suggestopedia to be a “generally superior teaching method” (Lozanov, 2003a).

Lozanov’s studies have been criticized as being methodologically unsound (Felix, 1989; Schiffler, 1986a; Mans, 1981; and Baur, 1982), and Felix advises critical examination, adding that the credibility of Lozanov’s work is also threatened by sensational claims in the popular press and some commercial enterprises.

Schuster (1976), founder of the Society for Accelerated Learning and Teaching (S.A.L.T.) -an “American synthesis” of Suggestopedia- , claims that relaxation techniques and classical background music produced a threefold increase in the speed of his students’ mastery of Spanish. In researching the effectiveness of Suggestopedia for beginners learning Russian at Cleveland State University, Kurkov (1977) claims a learning speed double that of a “conventional teaching methods” control group.

Most non-experimental studies appear to support Lozanov's major claims: large volumes of material, higher achievement than usual, and better mood and behaviour as a result of the use of Suggestopedia. These studies include teaching German to U.S.A. college students (Herr, 1978, 1979); German to mixed groups in Australia (Gassner-Roberts, 1982); Russian to Swedish teachers (Landahl, 1982); English to Indochinese refugees in the U.S. (Klockner, 1984); English to high school students in Liechtenstein (Stockwell, 1985); French to volunteer students (Dröbner, 1986); and mathematics to fourth-graders in the U.S. (Haines, 1982). Felix (1989, 28) claims that Suggestopedia offers the teaching

¹⁸ Ebbinghaus was a pioneer in memory research who plotted graphically the decay of memory over time. (Rose, 1985, 37).

profession "...the opportunity of accelerating student learning, of increasing the quantity and quality of learning, and (of) leading to greater student satisfaction and self-esteem".

In describing a five-year study adapting Suggestopedia to the teaching of English grammar and punctuation at a community college in the U.S., Cooter (1986) reports high achievement and better attitudes among students. In addition, his study suggests that the Lozanov method does not only work for small classes. While many of these studies had the benefit of favourable learning conditions, not all of them did, suggesting that this is not a prerequisite. Schiffler (1986b) claims, in fact, that the physical environment in Suggestopedic teaching has little effect compared to that of the music.

Reporting on work in a primary school in Austria, Beer (1978, 1979) claims better work and behaviour as well as a higher volume of work. In a five-year U.S. study with primary school students at least one year behind grade level, Prichard and Taylor (1980, 32) report best results with students who were near average in I.Q., had already acquired considerable vocabulary, and were old enough to consider relaxation, imagery, and drama a pleasant diversion from "regular" instruction and poorest results with young (second grade) lower I.Q. students, some of whom "...never quite seemed to catch on to what was expected of them in the relaxation exercises or to participate fully in the drama". They do report, however, substantial gains in reading comprehension scores. Schuster (1976), Walters (1977), and Peterson (1977) report less time needed to learn the same material, better student-teacher relations, better attitudes, and better locus of control scores for students in the experimental groups.

Felix (1989, 32) points out, however, that factors such as the personality profile of the teachers and more complete descriptions of the conventional teaching methods may influence these findings. She concedes, however, that research indicates that Suggestopedic methods take about one-half the amount of time taken to teach the same material more "conventionally".

Other studies have focused on more affective variables. In a one-year quasi-experimental study teaching “earth sciences” to ninth graders, Schuster and Ginn (1978) claim an improvement on three attitudinal measures and higher achievement than students taught the same material by a different teacher using her own methods.

Prichard, Schuster and Gensch (1980) investigate the effect of Suggestopedic techniques on fifth-grade reading ability and claim significant gains in reading comprehension and vocabulary compared to a control class but no differences on the same attitudinal measures used by Schuster and Ginn. Many studies claim improved results: Prichard, Schuster and Walters, 1979 (Agribusiness); Mignault, 1979 (French); Edwards, 1980 (creativity); and Shrum, 1985 (arithmetic to male prisoners). After a meticulous review of the literature, Felix (1989, 59) sums up as follows:

Whether the superior performance can be attributed to other effects, such as the experimental students feeling more important because of the novelty of the approach (Hawthorne effect) or the experimental teacher's positive expectations of their group's success (Rosenthal effect), is almost impossible to say since we do not have enough detailed information about the nature of these studies...Although it may be possible that these effects influenced the outcome of some studies, it cannot be assumed that this was the case in all studies.

This notion makes empirical studies on Suggestopedia very difficult. Surely one cannot try to control for placebo and Rosenthal effects when they are an integral part of the process?

Applegate (1983) conducted an extensive, federally-funded study comparing the results (measured on the California Achievement Test) of 538 students taught Suggestopedically and 517 students taught “conventionally” for two years. Results, evaluated by an independent body of researchers, suggest that Suggestopedia produces better results and better behaviour. Many students commented favourably on the relaxed atmosphere and absence of grades. A few students said they preferred a more structured, analytical, and “strictly conscious” approach (Felix, 1989, 87).

Van der Vyver and Botha (1989, 28-50) outline the implementation and evaluation of Suggestopedic language teaching in South Africa since 1984, when Charles Schmid presented a three-week workshop for staff at Stellenbosch University in preparation for a beginners' course in German for South African Airways cabin crew members. Botha (1986) claims significant improvement in Afrikaans for first-year students after a Suggestopedic remedial course, and Odendaal (1987) claims a statistically significant increase in the verbal IQ of college students in his experimental group receiving Suggestopedic instruction in English. In 1985 (and again in 1986), the SABC screened a four-part television documentary about Suggestopedia. It also broadcast a 26-part Suggestopedic-inspired series aimed at teaching intermediate English to black viewers. This project, Van der Vyver and Botha (1989, 31) claim, can be regarded as only "partially successful" as it was broadcast without the accompanying booklet, which contained the "activations" section, being distributed.

In 1986, the Interuniversity Committee for Language Teaching launched a pilot project in schools of the Department of Education and Training and the Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, the aim of which was to effect a significant (and cost-effective) improvement in the quality of teaching and learning by means of an in-service training programme for black primary school teachers. The Interuniversity Committee established an educational trust which would be responsible for launching, financing, supervising, and evaluating the pilot project. The UPTTRAIL Trust (the acronym stands for Upgrading of Teaching, Training and Learning) was established in 1987, and a specialist team from abroad, including James Hand, President of the American-based Society for Accelerative Learning and Teaching (SALT), visited South Africa in 1988 and conducted a series of workshops, after which the UPTTRAIL pilot project was announced. In 1987, the Department of Foreign Affairs established a Language School where 19 courses were offered to cater for the linguistic needs of diplomats. Van der Vyver and Botha (*Ibid.*, 47) claim that...

Probably the most outstanding characteristic of Suggestopedia...is the effect on the affective domain of the learner and the teacher. In all the projects carried out under the auspices of...the UPTTRAIL Trust, both teachers and students reported on the

pleasantness of the method. Students enjoy the relaxed and almost playful atmosphere devoid of fear or excessive stress and anxiety. Most students report on language gains they experienced, but also the growth they experienced personally because the learning situation not only made it possible but also actually enhanced it.

Under the supervision of the Institute for Language Teaching, electricity provider ESKOM offered a beginners' course in Zulu and an English course to black first-year engineering students. When I studied Suggestopedia at Stellenbosch in 1999, Suggestopedia was used to teach undergraduate German, and at the time of writing this dissertation (2007) is still used to teach first-year German.

Other than this, a search of the NEXUS and SABINET databases reveals that there is little current research on Suggestopedia. And thus, at a time when curricula are coming again under scrutiny, it is germane to consider the insights Suggestopedia might have for educational practice.

The following section describes two Westernized incarnations of Suggestopedia: Accelerated Learning and Brain-Based Learning. While both are clear descendents of the Lozanov model, Accelerated Learning is worthy of discussion because of its clever, "Western" packaging of Suggestopedia, and perhaps "Brain-Based Learning" should become the umbrella term under which we can bring Lozanov back into the universities in the new millennium.

3.6 "Accelerated" and "Brain-Based" Learning

The Suggestopedic method has been commercialized as, among other incarnations, "Superlearning" (Ostrander & Schroeder, 1979) and "Accelerated Learning" (Rose, 1985). In developing "Accelerated Learning", Rose has the benefit of more sophisticated neuroscience than Lozanov did. Before we get to Rose, therefore, it is appropriate to discuss some developments in our knowledge of brain function.

Hand (1986, 2) argues that the human brain "...functions on the basis of pattern recognition" and that the first task for a student learning any new subject is to perceive the overall pattern behind the "...maze or...scatterplot of thousands of seemingly unrelated facts and data". After describing the sophistication of the process of perception, he explains how so much of the "learning" in high school classes is in fact simply material stored in short-term memory:

The pitfall here is that students can juggle enough information in short-term memory to pass most weekly...tests on individual chapters, units, or modules; and this can be done without committing the information to long-term memory. (*Ibid.*, 6)

For long-term encoding, Hand says, information should be encoded in multiple areas of the brain. He cites Pribram's (1979) claim of a positive correlation between brain areas activated during both intake and recall: the more types of stimuli, the greater the number of sites that store the information. Using O'Keefe and Nadel's (1978) model, Hand (1986, 6) proposes the use of the locale (or contextual) system rather than the taxon (or rote) system, which is "...categorical, lacks a spacio-temporal context, and decays greatly over time if the information goes unrehearsed". The locale system, on the other hand,

...is based on context. It employs time and space coordinates, multiple channels for storage and retrieval or any or all of the relationships involved in the specific memory. Items stored in the locale long-term system are relatively permanent. Single occurrences, if they are greatly important or unusual to the person, are also stored here because they are contextual. The time-space coordinates attached to these memories allow for minimal interference between different representations of the same item. Memories which rely primarily on verbal communication will be nearly context-free and will be assigned to the taxon memory system, subject to considerable decay if not used often. By adding pictures, sounds, aromas and so on, a context is built around the verbal, causing this memory to be placed within the locale system. (*Ibid.*, 7)

When something is learnt thoroughly, Hand argues (*Ibid.*, 8), the axonal and dendritic¹⁹ connections enlarge, which allows further chemical transmission into the synapse, which makes for easier encoding. Further rehearsal may lead to new connections.

¹⁹ Axons and dendrites are part of the structure of the cell bodies of neurons. Encarta (2005) explains that axons conduct impulses away from the cell body to stimulate other cells, for example, another neuron, a gland cell, or a muscle. Dendrites, on the other hand, conduct impulses initially generated at another site in the body towards the cell body of the neuron.

Rose (1985) popularized the (more palatable to Western tastes?) term “Accelerated Learning”, and the company Accelerated Learning Systems created ingenious “memory maps” and produced Lozanov-based foreign language book/tape/video sets. In my view, the chief contribution of this movement was the exploitation of our near perfect visual memory, although this derives, of course, from Lozanov’s (1978, 223) claim that exposure to art forms leads to immediate assimilation of material without any conscious effort. In my own classroom practice, Rose helped me to create innovative visual summaries of, for example, Shakespeare plays, giving me and my students useful one-page synopses of entire texts. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter V.

Wenger (1987) confirms the efficacy of Lozanov’s method but extends the use of visuals and visualisation. In the words of Rose (1985, 31), “...(v)isual memory is essentially perfect. The key to memory (and learning) is therefore to...form strong visual associations for new material.” De Andrade (1986, 23-24) provides an interesting reason why memory of pictures is vastly superior to memory of words. In relating the neocortex to the left hemisphere and the limbic system to the right, he argues that the left hemisphere processes approximately 40 bits of information per second while the right, processing globally, “gestaltically”, processes 10 million bits per second.

Rose’s (1985) book is replete with clever illustrations to prove his point. The following drawing from the “Accelerated Learning Systems” French course shows how words have been ingeniously embedded into the illustrations:

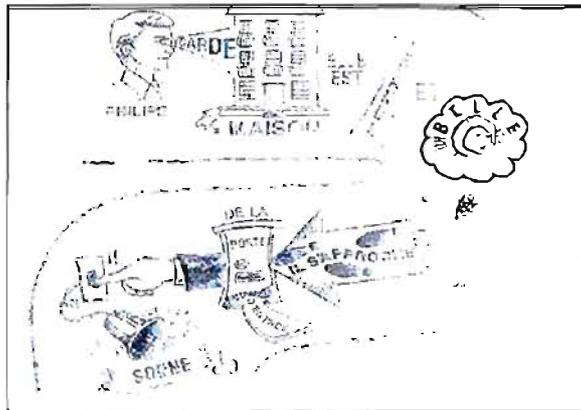


Figure 3. French course excerpt (Rose, 1985)

Drawing upon the Human Information Processing model of Lindsay and Norman (1972), Rose (1985, 63) provides the following representation of a simple 30-second “free association” exercise. Rose argues that the drawing shows how memory (and its headquarters, the brain) function tangentially rather than in straight lines; and by connection and association rather than logical sequence.

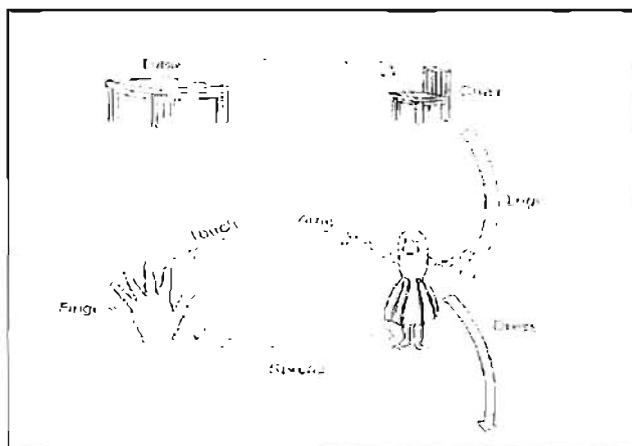


Figure 4. Pictorial Associative Network (Rose, 1985, 65)

Appendix B contains further examples of “visual maps” to summarise a chapter on memory (figure 19), to outline the 24 figures of speech (figure 20), and to enable the student to “see” all 16 of his prescribed poems side-by-side on a single page (figure 21).

Rose (*Ibid.*, 100) provides interesting justification for Lozanov's use of music by describing how Jenny demonstrated the wave patterns caused by musical notes. Jenny was inspired by 18th century German physicist Chladni (1726-1827), who scattered sand on steel discs and observed the changing patterns produced when notes were played on a violin (Figure 5 overleaf).

Rose (*Ibid.*, 102) explains:

It appears that the Baroque composers, attempting to create an ideal mathematical form and harmony in their music, managed to produce exactly the right frequency and sound to harmonize the functioning of the brain and produce a state of calm, relaxed alertness...It was a primary aim of Baroque composers to use music to create a specific unifying mood and to liberate the mind from earthly concerns.

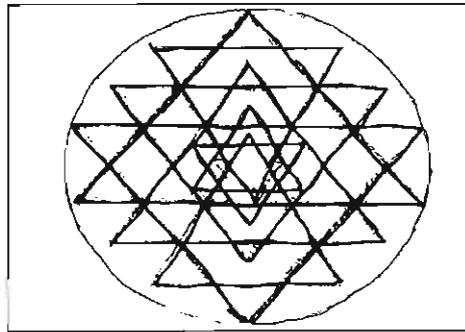


Figure 5. Mandala (Rose, 1985, 101)

Aside from some differences in jargon, "Accelerated Learning" follows the Lozanov model closely. One website, ("Accelerated Learning School", 2004), besides making the valuable point that "...learning needs to become less about what the teacher does and more about what the learner experiences", provides a list of Principles of Accelerated Learning (I quote only those significantly different from Lozanov's and those whose phraseology I feel adds something to our knowledge of the Lozanov model):

- Learning involves the whole mind and body. Learning does not merely take place in the head. It involves the whole/mind with all its senses, emotions, and receptors.
- Learning takes place on many levels simultaneously.... Great teaching or training engages people on many levels simultaneously (conscious and unconscious, mental and physical) so that learning becomes a total brain/body experience. The brain, after all, is not sequential, but a parallel processor that thrives when it's challenged.

- Learning comes from doing the work with feedback. People learn best in context. Anything that has been learned in isolation is difficult to remember and evaporates quickly..... The real and concrete are far better teachers than the hypothetical and the abstract, especially when there is sufficient time for immersion, feedback, reflection, more immersion.
- The Image Brain absorbs information instantly and automatically. The part of the brain that deals with images is four times larger than the part that deals with words. In other words, the human nervous system is more of an image processor than a word processor. Concrete images are much easier to grasp and retain than are verbal abstractions. Transferring verbal abstractions into concrete images of all kinds will make those verbal abstractions faster to learn and easier to perform.

In its evolution from Suggestopedia, Accelerated Learning has the benefit of other discoveries, such as Gardner's (1993) theory of Multiple Intelligences. S.A.L.T. became I.A.L. (the International Alliance of Learning), which subscribes to Gardner's aim of respecting "...the many differences among people, the multiple variations in the ways that they learn, the several modes by which they can be assessed, and the almost infinite number of ways in which they can leave a mark on the world" (I.A.L., 2004). Accelerated Learning tries to help students "...discover their own style of learning and (gives) them confidence in their style even though it may differ from their classmates' or from prior learning situations" (Kindt and Yoshizumi, 2004, 1).

Gardner's (1993) theory challenges the emphasis of traditional education on mathematical/logical and linguistic intelligence. He originally proposed seven intelligences, the other five being visual/spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, inter-personal, intra-personal, and musical. Atkinson (1991, 1) suggests that this is an integral part of "Accelerated Learning":

What we're really doing is combining theories of multiple intelligence together with art, which is a very solid base for retaining information longer, with a very deep understanding of that material. It far surpasses rote learning.

Buzan (2000) proposes a slightly different range of intelligences: creative, personal, social, spiritual, physical, sensual, sexual, numeric, spatial, and verbal. In addition, he has popularized the "Mind Map". Accelerated Learning, in fact, has developed its own "Memory Maps" which "...act not simply as a way of revising information when it has

already been learned *but as a way of creating memory (that is learning) in the first place*” (Rose, 1985, 65; his italics)

Drawing on Sperry’s (1972) Nobel prize-winning work in the sixties, Accelerated Learning emphasizes the importance of activities that use both left and right “sides” of the brain. Theoretically, in a majority of people, despite remarkable individual differences, the left hemisphere of the neocortex processes analytically and is the site of sequential activities, mathematics, logic, and language, while the right hemisphere provides a global overview and is the site of spatial relationships, music, rhythm, dreaming, imagination, creativity, colour, visualisation, and art (Klauser, 1986, 26).

Sperry’s colleague Levy (1985, 4), however, claims (his italics):

One of the ideas I had when I was still working with Roger Sperry was that the right hemisphere...attends to and represents the holistic, configurational aspects of its appearances and that the left hemisphere is more analytic. The right hemisphere synthesizes things into a global form, whereas the left seems to pay attention to specific and detailed features. This is now a popular notion, *but I think it may be wrong.*

Hand (1986, 7) thus deletes “analysis of detail” and “sequence formation” from popular listings of these domains and offers the following list, true, he says, for “...90% of the tested right-handed males from Western cultures”:

<i>Left Hemisphere</i>	<i>Right Hemisphere</i>
verbal, linguistic	intonation, inflection
ideation (abstractions)	pictorial and pattern sense
conceptual similarities	visual similarities
sense of time	location in space
controls right side of body	controls left side of body
numbers, quantities	melodic perception
numbers, quantities	poetical processing
geometric configurations	insight

Figure 6. Right vs. left brain (Hand, 1986)

LeHecka (2004, 19) explains how Accelerated Learning (AL) appeals to both “sides” of the brain:

...AL features logical, informational lectures (left) presented in a dramatic, sensory way (right). There is rote learning with repetition and drill (left) with music and rhythm built in (right). There is verbalization and reading (left) coupled with relaxation and positive suggestion (right). By simultaneously engaging the right and left hemispheres in learning, AL succeeds in holistic education.

Zemke (1995, 1) claims that Accelerated Learning, as practised today, embraces a veritable “...delicatessen of non-traditional learning designs and techniques”. The I.A.L. website (“I.A.L.”, 2004) describes it as “...a rich potpourri of innovative ideas and experiences,” something of a “hodgepodge” of multi-media, didactic games, music, themes, mnemonics, props, and learner participation.

In industry, “Accelerated Learning” has been used with good effect to teach delegates about everything from trauma injuries to accounting software at companies from Wisconsin Electric and American Express to American Family Insurance and the Arizona Public Service (Zemke, 1995, 1).

Today, one is more likely to hear the term “brain-based” learning. One article (“Funderstanding”, 2004) claims that the following are the core principles of brain-based learning:

- The brain is a parallel processor, meaning it can perform several activities at once, like tasting and smelling.
- Learning engages the whole physiology.
- The search for meaning is innate.
- The search for meaning comes through patterning.
- Emotions are critical to patterning.
- The brain processes wholes and parts simultaneously.
- Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception.
- Learning involves both conscious and unconscious processes.
- We have two types of memory: spatial and rote.
- We understand best when facts are embedded in natural, spatial memory.
- Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat.
- Each brain is unique.

Jensen (2000, 4) stresses the metaphor comparing the human brain to a jungle: “...active at times, quiet at others, but always teeming with life”. Like the jungle, the main need of the

brain is survival. Jensen argues that the “brain-based naturalist” is concerned with discovering students’ impediments and motivators so that the desired behaviour emerges as a natural consequence.

Like Lozanov, Jensen (*Ibid.*, 12) recognizes the importance of multi-path learning:

The brain simultaneously operates on many levels of consciousness, processing at once a world of colors, movements, emotions, shapes, smells, sounds, tastes, feelings, and more. It assembles patterns, composes meaning, and sorts daily life experiences from an extraordinary number of clues. It is so efficient at processing information that nothing in the living or man-made world comes close to matching human learning potential. Knowing this, perhaps, it is easier to conceive how this amazing processor...is undernourished, if not starved, in the typical classroom. Many educators unknowingly inhibit the brain’s learning ability by teaching in an ultra-linear, structured, and predictable fashion. The result is bored or frustrated learners who...perpetuate the underachievement cycle.

Multi-tasking, Jensen says, is the natural task of the brain. He cites Sylwester’s (1998) comparison of the brain to a jazz quartet, the four lobes blending “...without overt communication; yet... they make great music together” (*Ibid.*, 13). LeHecka, (2001, 21) argues that the brain’s deep structure is essentially holographic and that the brain cell synapses may contain thousands of holographic images:

Multiple channels of information input increase the number of waveforms assimilated, increasing the specificity of the interference pattern and ultimately storing portions of the memory in multiple locations. All aspects of the particular memory may be retrieved from stimulation of any storage location, just as a hologram is reconstructed from any portion of the holographic plate.

Based upon what we know about the brain, Hand’s (1982, 11-13) suggestions to teachers include the following (names of brain areas activated in parentheses):

- Read the words aloud (Broca’s area, Wernicke’s area, left hemisphere, sensory and motor cortex, and the angular gyrus)
- Read with emotion and inflection (right hemisphere areas for prosodic functions, right motor and sensory cortex, and limbic system)
- Develop a pictorial image of the meaning of the words and sketch a visual summary (primary visual cortex, left and right motor and sensory cortices, central and peripheral nervous system from the brain stem through to the arms, hands and fingers)
- Colour code sketches (discrimination within the right visual cortex)
- For review of previously learned material, use relaxation techniques, remembrance of joyful and easy learning, and the playing of Baroque largo passages (lowers beta rhythms within the left hemisphere and allows increasing alpha rhythms)

Schuster (1994, 27) observes that joy is associated with hormonal endorphins and encephalins, important elements in learning. He also points out that music, although more obscure psychobiologically, most probably leads to relaxation (more encephalins) and a richer stimulatory environment (a bigger network for cells). According to Minewiser (2000, 23), this lack of tension in the teaching environment keeps neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol and acetylcholine levels low. This is critical because research has shown that higher levels of these substances in the body impair both long- and short-term memory.

LeHecka (2004, 21) claims that, according to triune brain theory, relaxation produced by baroque music affects the R-complex²⁰. The limbic portion²¹ of the brain is influenced by positive affective environments that Lozanov suggested could be achieved by proper teacher training. This integration of the R-complex and the limbic portions of the brain enhances the processing of new cortical information.

It seems to me that, in many respects, Lozanov's methodology lives on in "accelerated" and "brain-based" learning. Whatever the term, surely we as teachers should know as much as we can about the organ we are helping to develop? Can we really call ourselves professionals if do not acquaint ourselves with contemporary neurological literature and consider its relevance in our classrooms? And should we South Africans, when attempting any redress of the past and its resultant intellectual desolation, not be looking towards the brain if we are to accelerate this process?

²⁰ Also known as the reptilian brain and reptilian complex, the R-complex is composed of the brain stem and basal ganglia and controls survival and responds to basic needs such as hunger and thirst and needs for sex, sleep, and air (Hand, 1986, 17).

²¹ The limbic system is part of the mammalian brain and controls emotions, sexuality, and the pleasure centres (Rose, 1985, 18).

3.7 Conclusion

From the foregoing detailed description of Suggestopedia and some of its incarnations, I hope that the reader is convinced that it is a valuable and versatile methodology. How one might harness the full power of the brain towards the skill of creative writing needs to be considered in relation to Suggestopedia and the South African multilingual classroom.

In designing the creative writing intervention to be used in this project, I had to consider how I would adapt the foregoing Suggestopedic principles. What sort of learning environment would I create? What “Concert sessions” would I “perform”? In the next chapter, then, I integrate elements from this discussion of Suggestopedia into the creation of a research design for the Suggestopedic intervention promoting the development of creative writing.

Chapter 4
Research Design

But curb thou the high spirit in thy breast, for gentle ways are best, and keep aloof from sharp contentions.

-Homer (c. 750 B.C.)

The more the data banks record about each one of us, the less we exist.

-Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

An approximate answer to the right question is worth a great deal more than a precise answer to the wrong question.

--The first golden rule of mathematics, sometimes attributed to John Tukey (1915-2000)

In this chapter, the methodological concerns and the design of the project are described. First, the chapter categorizes the project as qualitative, “immersion” research with an element of narrative inquiry. Second, it outlines a research design. Third, it identifies the research sample, and finally it outlines more detailed design and planning for the intervention.

4.1 “Qualitative”, “Action”, “Narrative Inquiry” and “Immersion” Research

Because the “product” of this intervention is an aesthetic work, I was keen from the beginning for this dissertation to make its appeal qualitatively rather than quantitatively. This was not because there is a lack of quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of Suggestopedia but because I wished to impress the reader with vivid writing rather than a list of grades. My aim, then, was to describe qualitatively my attempts to adapt Suggestopedia in the English classroom and particularly to the teaching of creative writing in a multilingual environment.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2003, 19) introduce their discussion of qualitative research by arguing that:

...opponents of positivism are united by their common rejection of the belief that human behaviour is governed by general, universal laws and characterized by underlying regularities... the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated.

Qualitative research, Cohen *et al* go on to explain, rejects "...the viewpoint of the detached, objective observer..." and is a "...subjective...undertaking,...a means of dealing with the direct experience of people in specific contexts" (*Ibid.*, 19-20). Unlike positivism, qualitative research allows us to "...take account of our unique ability to interpret our experiences and represent them to ourselves" (*Ibid.*)

As creative writing is a highly subjective field, I felt that qualitative research would be an appropriate methodology: a description of my own sensitivity to and appreciation of students' nuances, world views, and cultural narratives would communicate far more than a comparison of "before" and "after" essay scores.

In considering the list of distinguishing features of qualitative research proposed by Cohen *et al.* (*Ibid.*, 21-22), I conclude that the qualitative domain is the suitable realm of the creative writing researcher. Qualitative researchers and writers "...make meanings in and through their activities" and "actively construct their social world". Both groups see the world itself as "multi-layered and complex" and "fluid and changing rather than fixed and static". Both understand that "...there are multiple interpretations of, and perspectives on, single events and situations..." and "...events and individuals are unique and largely non-generalizable..." In my multilingual (ex-) classroom, this sensitivity to "multiple interpretations" of experience was an essential tool.

Cohen *et al.* identify "...three significant 'traditions'..." in qualitative research: phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interactionism (*Ibid.*, 23). While I am still too inexperienced a researcher to align myself with any of these three traditions, I see my Suggestopedic project as embracing elements of "action research" (associated

with Lewin, 1948), “immersion research” (associated with Crabtree and Miller, 1992), and “narrative inquiry” (associated with Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) methodologies.

The research methodology resembles “action research” in that it is aimed at improving my own teaching practice, it responds to my immediate needs, and it aims at “...supporting and engineering change as an integral part of the research process” (Robson, 2002, 6). The project ultimately aims at “breaking down” the discourse of the “prose composition” and making its successful creation an achievable aim for mostly “previously disadvantaged” students.

The research design shows evidence of at least the first four stages of Bassey’s (1998, 94-95) cyclical structure of “action research”: define the enquiry, describe the situation, collect evaluative data and analyse it, review the data and look for contradictions, tackle a contradiction by introducing change, monitor the change, analyse evaluative data about the change, review the change, and decide what to do next.

As the entire “action research” cycle is not followed, and because of the “literary” data, this project may more likely fall into the category of “immersion approach” proposed by Crabtree and Miller (1992) and summed up by Robson (2002, 458) as:

- Least structured and most interpretive, emphasizing researcher insight, intuition, and creativity.
- Methods are fluid and not systematized.
- Close to literary/artistic interpretation and connoisseurship (i.e. calling for expert knowledge and targeted at a similarly skilled audience).
- Difficult to reconcile with the scientific approach.

Proponents of such research, Robson says (*Ibid.*, 457), are “...particularly resistant to any systematization of their analytical process”. I feel, though, that such a loosely structured approach is most suitable in this case because our “final” product in this case is an artistic work. Although I have provided a small number of quantitative statistics in the “Analysis” section of the following chapter, I am loath to reduce this exercise to a comparison of grade averages, means, medians, and modes.

It was only after I had completed the main body of this dissertation that I became aware of the “narrative inquiry” research methodology, which encourages teachers to

...compose and reflect on their stories of learning and of selfhood within a supportive and challenging community, (and thus) begin to resist and revise the scripting narratives of the culture and begin to compose new narratives of identity and practice (and) begin to author their own development...

(Ritchie and Wilson, 2000, 1).

The emotional participation of the inquirer and a suitably “passionate scholarship”, Kincheloe argues (2003, 64-65), produces a “new dimension” of knowing in which the old rules are no longer relevant. The narrative inquiry methodology would seem by definition to be suitable in studies involving creative writing.

Having no control group; based on a subjective, creative discipline; and utilizing a method that has at its centre elements (Placebo, Hawthorne, and Rosenthal effects) conventionally “controlled for” by researchers, this project is inevitably “unscientific”, “naturalistic”, and exploratory rather than empirical. I intended the thrust of my argument to be literary rather than numerical and to come from a focus on the texts themselves rather than my mark file. If anything convinces the reader that the Suggestopedic intervention has been efficacious, I would like it to be the work and comments of the students rather than my own analysis. The following section describes the research design.

4.2 Research Design

In considering the research design, I felt that the aesthetic quality of the raw material in this project justified a persuasive, “literary” style rather than a “scientific” one. My main audience of English teachers (especially those with a “personal growth” persuasion like my own) will understand this: we would rather be a Mary Poppins²² than a Mr. Gradgrind²³.

I intended the main thrust of my argument to be a qualitative comparison between other essays previously written by students to the final drafts of their so-called “100% essays”. I

²² Stevenson, R. (Director). (1964). *Mary Poppins* [film]. USA: Disney.

²³ Dickens, C. (1854). *Hard Times*. Suffolk: Penguin

hoped to argue that the post-intervention writing was more sophisticated in style, richer in imagery, and simply more interesting than students' previous essays.

The research design was thus flawed from the start. I was trying to compare compositions written under "exam" conditions (and during the accompanying end-of-term "carnival" atmosphere) with compositions that students had edited and re-edited over months. I hoped to argue that, once students had learned the generic conventions of the "prose composition", they would subsequently perform better under "examination" conditions. I see now that a far longer-ranging study would be necessary to make such an argument credible. Hoping to find that the intervention had a positive influence on students' self-esteem, I intended also to administer pre- and post-intervention self-esteem assessments. The research design had to accommodate the Lozanov methodology, learning environment, and teacher attitude. I therefore divided the project into three loose phases.

In the first phase, I would bring into being an optimum learning environment. This would include fostering the correct teacher attitudes and expectations and the design and creation of "peripheral stimulation" posters created by my students "advertising" effective writing techniques.

In the second phase, I would run a series of lessons designed to provide a "big picture" of the creation of a successful "prose composition" and then a closer analysis of its components. This phase would also include the adapted "Concert" sessions and discussions and writing games to serve as "Activations".

The final phase would include all post-intervention activity, including analysis of data. Here, my most important decision was what criteria I would use to identify effective writing.

I intended to supplement my own observations with data gathered in student interviews after the intervention, written feedback from students, and my field notes in a teacher’s journal. The following figure illustrates the intended research design and schedule of work.

Date	Stage	Actions
December 2003-February 2004	Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Obtain principal’s permission -Inform students -Begin journal writing -Administer self-esteem questionnaires -Create learning environment
March-August 2004	Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Introduce “100% essay” -Discuss writing “tips” -Write first drafts -Edit first drafts -Write second drafts -Peer evaluation of second drafts -Concert Sessions -“Activations”: Writing games -Write final drafts and journal entries
September-December 2004	Post-intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -De-briefing -Feedback to stakeholders -Post-intervention self-esteem questionnaire -Interview students -Analyse data -Write dissertation

Figure 7. Intended research design and schedule of work

It is clear that my creative writing intervention embodies the “process” approach to writing associated with Murray (1972) including as it does the “process” of pre-writing, writing, and re-writing. The following section describes the Research Sample.

4.3 The Research Sample

As the qualitative nature of this study required no control group, I used all the students I taught for this project. Hence, I conducted the same lessons with three Grade 9 classes and two Grade 11 classes, more or less simultaneously. A total of 158 students were involved: 89 in Grade 9 and 69 in Grade 11.

The vast majority, as I noted in the “Contexts” chapter, were black students with isiZulu as their home language. Indian and “Coloured” students were the next largest groups, and a minority of white students constituted a throwback to the school’s previous status under apartheid. Demographics within the student body varied considerably: students commuted to the school from squatter camps by train and wealthy suburbs by car. A number of students lived in a nearby orphans’ home.

Bearing in mind the Suggestopedic principles I described in the previous chapter and the research sample as described above, my more detailed planning was based upon a number of salient questions, which are discussed in the following section.

4.4 The Planning of the Project

In planning this project, my general aims included addressing students’ barriers to learning and monitoring, modifying, and communicating my high expectations. I wanted to suggest positive results and dispel any potential fear of failure. I wanted to create a secure learning environment in which all students could take chances and try new ideas and processes without fear of criticism.

I wanted to present a “global”, multimodal, simultaneous, high volume, “immersion” input to inspire students’ creative writing. The classroom should be a “total immersion environment” appealing to all the senses. I wanted to inspire and encourage my students to edit and re-edit until the quality of their work satisfied them.

Through the journal entries, I wanted to make writing a regular, enjoyable activity and to remove some of the “dydactogenic” negative suggestions associated with writing as a result of poor grades, essays awash with teacher corrections in red, and school-based “punishment” exercises of “writing out” school rules, pages from textbooks, and “lines”.

In particular, I wanted to “deconstruct” the generic conventions of the “prose composition” and make the “100%” successful creation of such essays an attainable goal for all my students including those who were usually more than satisfied just with passing grades.

My project design loosely divided the intervention into the following six phases and 18 “lessons” as illustrated in Figure 8 below

<p><u>Phase One: Preparation</u> Preliminary classroom activities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Obtain principal’s permission to carry out the research, ii. Tell students about project, and iii. Prepare the classroom materials for the intervention. 	<p><u>Lesson 1: Administer pre-intervention self-esteem assessment</u> <u>Lesson 2: Introduction to Journal Writing</u> Introduce students to the idea of a fortnightly journal. I usually announce that the only criterion for each session is to fill a page, no matter how “stupid” or repetitive the content. I explain that the purpose of this exercise is to free up the brain; to give it permission to play with ideas; and to enable thoughts to move directly from the brain to the pen. I explain also that all entries are confidential except emergency cases such as suicide or arson threats. <u>Lesson 3: Record the Individual Details</u> Not really a “lesson”, hut time during which students work on writing or other tasks while I have one-on-one conversations with students. Begin recording details about each student’s home language, “passion” (a hobby or interest), and career goal. I shall use this information to assist students in choosing topics for their essays.</p>
<p><u>Phase Two: Preparing the Environment.</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create posters to decorate environment and to facilitate “peripheral” learning, ii. Teacher considers how he will suggest success to his students 	<p><u>Lesson 4: Create a Peripheral Learning Environment: Students create colourful posters</u> Students create posters about creative writing tips or providing positive messages or explaining words, parts of speech, or figures of speech.</p>
<p><u>Phase Three: The Lessons.</u> This phase was planned to include all the classroom activity immediately preceding the Concert sessions. In this phase, my intention was to provide students with a barrage of ideas and tips to improve their writing.</p>	<p><u>Lesson 5: Introduce the Concept of the “100%” Essay</u> Explain to students that this will be an on-going project that would continue for the full school year. The assignment: “Find” a suitable topic, create a composition, edit it, polish it, and re-edit it until it is worthy of publication and the glittering “100%” grade. I must communicate my high expectations, convince students that their own lives are interesting, and suggest that they should write for people all over the world, some of whom will no doubt be fascinated by details from the day-to-day lives of isiZulu-speaking teenagers. I shall suggest writing these essays for international publication. <u>Lesson 6: First Draft</u> Students to write first drafts to the background of Mozart’s Horn Concerto Number Three. <u>Lesson 7: Lecture on Writing Tips</u> Discuss writing tips (focus, detail, strong verbs, imagery, experience, and suggestion). Encourage students to write about a real experience, to focus on short time periods rather than have big</p>

	<p>time transitions like “a year later”, to be detailed, and to use sensory imagery. Tell Zen koans in advising students to be “in the moment”. Ask students to complete first drafts. Games in order to encourage “out-of-the-box” thinking.</p> <p><u>Lesson 8: Suggestions for Review</u> Review each topic and first draft with the writer and provide suggestions for the next draft. Where possible, I shall try to relate the writing to the student’s career goal and passion. I shall also record the title of the proposed “100% Essay”.</p> <p><u>Lesson 9: Write Second Draft</u> To the accompaniment of Mozart’s Horn Concerto Number One, invite students to write second drafts. The teacher evaluation for these drafts will simply be a written suggestion.</p> <p><u>Lesson 10: Peer Evaluation of “Exam” Essays</u> Distribute the previous term’s “exam” essays. Each student will scan an essay, attach a comment and a grade, and pass the essay to the next student.</p> <p><u>Lessons 11 to 13: Peer Evaluation of “100%” Essays</u> The teacher will read each second draft aloud without revealing the identity of the writer. Students to express their opinions about the quality of the writing and to give suggestions for further editing.</p>
<p><u>Phase Four: The Concert Sessions.</u> My intention in this phase was to adapt the classic Suggestopedic split-page textbook.</p>	<p><u>Lesson 14: Concert Session</u> After a short relaxation exercise, the teacher will read examples of what he deems to be “good” essays to the accompaniment of assorted classical and baroque music. Students will follow on copies of these texts with an adapted Lozanov split-page: the right-hand side showing names of writing techniques adjacent to where such techniques are used in the text. The right-hand column will not be referred to by the teacher.</p>
<p><u>Phase Five: The Final Draft.</u> I planned to give students one more session of assorted classical music while they wrote their final drafts.</p>	<p><u>Lesson 15: The “Final” Draft</u> While the teacher must suggest to students that no draft is ever really “final”, this will be the last chance to reach the “full marks” grade. The teacher will play Vivaldi’s “Oboe Concerto in D minor” for the full lesson, then students may do further editing at home to be ready to submit “final” drafts the following day.</p> <p><u>Lesson 16: Final Journal Entry</u> While students will, as usual, have liberty to write about whatever they like in their journals, the suggested topic for this final session will be to reflect on their progress in creative writing this year, especially in terms of the “100% Essay”.</p>
<p><u>Phase Six: Post-Intervention.</u> I intended this phase to comprise all post-intervention activities including de-briefing, report-back, and data analysis.</p>	<p><u>Lesson 17: De-Briefing</u> The teacher will hand copies of typed essays to those students whose essays are chosen for publication in the appendices of this dissertation. He will also read the two “100% essays” aloud and thank all students for their participation.</p> <p><u>Lesson 18: Administer post-intervention self-esteem assessment.</u> De-briefing and feedback. Interview students about their feelings about the project. Analyse data and write dissertation</p>

Figure 8. Detailed project design

Besides being something that my “personal growth” Wits University education had trained me to do, I hoped that journal writing would “de-suggest” to students that their ability was limited. The “anything goes” principle would hopefully encourage some “out-of-the-box” thinking.

The following activity in the preparation phase, recording the individual details, was designed to give both teacher and writer “clues” as to a suitable topic, but it also served to show an interest in the individual student and foster an effective “suggestive link”. The creation of posters would also serve to create effective “peripheral stimulation” and to get students thinking about effective writing techniques. In the “Intervention” phase, the creation of the concept of the “100% essay” also served as “de-suggestion”; I hoped that the concept would “suggest” that achieving an A⁺ symbol for this essay was an achievable goal. The music would serve to create a state of “concentrative psychorelaxation”.

During the Concert Sessions, I hoped that bold and dramatic music would inspire interest in the examples of vivid writing that would serve as our texts. In the second concert sessions, slow baroque music would accompany the same texts.

Data from the final journal entry would serve as student feedback on the project. Analysis of student essays would be expedited by applying the list of seven criteria reproduced in Figure 9 below.

Criterion	Key Questions
interesting use of language	Does the piece contain unusual comparisons? Does the piece contain effective sound devices such as onomatopoeia?
originality	Does the essay show evidence of creative, “out-of-the-box” thinking? Does the content move beyond the obvious?
focus	Does the writing have an “in-the-moment” quality?
sincerity	Is the writing sincere, “real”, and credible?
passion, inspiration	Does the composition have passion, zest, and/or “X factor”?
“publishability”	Is the composition publishable?
relevance	Would anyone other than the writer want to read it?

Figure 9. Criteria for evaluating essays

I developed this set of criteria myself after rejecting traditional assessment rubrics that allocate a portion of the final grade for structure, spelling, or punctuation. I was looking for primal talent, raw material, “inspiration”, and potential rather than technical correctness. Structure and spelling could be improved, I reasoned, but we needed some substantial “content” first.

Only one of these criteria would need to be met, I planned, for the essay to be worthy of acceptance for publication. Indeed, I remain committed to the idea that, as in choosing a house or romantic partner, the “X-factor” in creative writing is the most important criterion. I hoped that the post-intervention self-esteem questionnaire would reveal improved self-esteem as a serendipitous side-effect.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined how I adapted elements of Suggestopedia to create a three-stage research design using a qualitative methodology imbued with an “action research”/ “immersion research”/ “narrative inquiry” spirit. Whether the elements of this design integrated into a pedagogically effective, “Suggestopedic” vehicle for the teaching of creative writing would be the benchmark of success or failure in this project. But these are the concerns of the following chapter in which I describe the project itself.

Chapter 4 **The “Hundred Percent Essay” Project**

The twentieth century encounter between alphabetic and electronic faces of culture confers on the printed word a crucial role in staying the return to the Africa within...
- Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

You will certainly not be able to take the lead in all things yourself, for to one man a god has given deeds of war, and to another the dance, to another lyre and song, and in another wide-sounding Zeus puts a good mind.
- Homer (c. 750 B.C.)

Right now, a moment of time is fleeting by! Capture its reality in paint! To do that, we must put all else out of our minds. We must become that moment, make ourselves a sensitive recording plate...give the image of what we actually see, forgetting everything that has been seen before our time.
- Paul Cezanne (1839-1906)

This chapter describes what actually happened during the Suggestopedic intervention I deployed between January and December 2004.

I begin this chapter by painting a portrait of my (ex) students and the collective energy of their classes as I perceived them. Second, I explain what actually happened during the various phases and “lessons” of the classroom intervention. In doing so, it becomes necessary for me to explain other Suggestopedic elements in my classroom, so I digress to describe how I have adapted Suggestopedia to teach English literature. The chapter ends with a brief quantitative and a lengthier “literary” analysis of the students’ final drafts.

5.1 The Students

In this section, I provide background information about the students in their respective classes who were involved in the project.

The male/female student ratio was approximately 1:1, and the racial ratio was approximately 70% black, 12½% “coloured”, 12½% Indian, and 5% white. While some students lived in the surrounding suburb (Umbilo), many commuted daily from the city as well as ex-“townships” Umlazi and Kwamashu.

In an attempt to control “difficult” Grade 9 students, the school decided in 2004 to separate male and female students. The Grade 11 class allocation was based on subject choice. The Grade 9 students were aged between 14 and 17, and the Grade 11 students between 16 and 19.

Grade “9A” consisted of 30 girls ranging from demure, studious types to those in the throes of adolescent rebellion. The minority of loudmouths made this class, at times, unpopular among the staff: the “class secretary” carried a “discipline book” in which names of misbehaving students were recorded by each teacher. During the course of the year, some of these girls discovered boys, others suffered abuse and/or family trauma, and some dabbled in the occult. Some disappeared for weeks on end; some were at school on average for only one day a week. Others were always present, focused, and eager.

Grade “9C” consisted of 30 boys. One of the two more challenging students moved to other schools during the second term, and then I began to get the wonderful feeling that this was one of those rare occasions when one has “gelled” sufficiently with a class to be able to relax and simply teach. Some students in this class were witty and articulate; others, once again, appeared to be functionally illiterate.

Grade “9E” also consisted of all boys and included a number of affable, enthusiastic, and intelligent students, but too many were in the midst of a particularly bad stretch of adolescent turmoil to give me that same relaxed freedom. Again, the “class secretary” carried a “discipline book” in which teachers recorded behavioural indiscretions. This was

my “register class” with whom I completed the morning roll-call and invigilated weekly testing.

Some of the staff referred to the Grade 11s as the “lost generation” because they had emerged from the newly introduced “OBE.” initiatives and the subsequent confusion among teachers about their implications at the chalkboard.

The year saw the Grade 11s getting over their adolescent angst, and after the first few months, most had somewhat settled. “11B” found themselves together because they were all studying Mathematics, Accounting, Business Economics, and Economics; the livelier periods of the day must surely have been English and isiZulu. It sometimes took this large class a while to settle, but we developed a good rapport even though the class consisted of 42 students and we did not have enough desks and chairs to accommodate them all.

There were fewer students in “11E”, but these “drama queens” were sometimes trickier to handle. At completely the other end of the spectrum, this lot were together because they all studied Speech and Drama. Some egos may stereotypically have been a little larger or more fragile than those of some “11B” students. In addition, we had some “difficult” students whose names were often mentioned in the Staff Room.

5.2 Preparation

While we did spend proportionately quite some class time on the “100 % Essay”, it was only one of many projects (literary, “oral”, and “language”) we undertook at both Grade 9 and 11 levels. In reality, the teaching environment included Suggestopedic elements from the start of the teaching year. Students also wrote journals regularly from January.

I decided to abandon the idea of a self-esteem questionnaire when a well-meaning reader of my research proposal asked whether self-esteem was in fact an educational effect. While I think that Lozanov would argue that improvement in self-esteem is undoubtedly an

educational effect, I do not regret the loss of this instrument: so much of my practice is Suggestopedic in character that I would have had to administer the questionnaire practically on the day I first met these students in January for any statistics to be convincing.

5.3 Creating the Environment

Suggestopedic elements were applied from the first day of the teaching year in January, 2004. My greeting students at the door has become an established part of my practice, although of course getting all the names right usually takes some weeks. Fortunately, as I already had many advertising and figurative language posters from the previous year, the room already looked quite interesting and hopefully began a process of “peripheral” learning: some posters illustrated figures of speech (Meiosis: Just a drop of whisky), some carried positive messages (Relax!, My brain absorbs effortlessly, I am a winner), and some appeared to advertise products not usually advertised at all (Air: The only Way to Breathe This Summer).

The rest of the room was decidedly un-Suggestopedic: an old-fashioned chalkboard and flap-top wooden desks riddled with graffiti. After the first week, my desk also delivered the wrong message. Only now, in writing up the data emerging from my research, do I realise that I did not consider this, and my desk was an untidy pile of unmarked work, files, books, and bureaucratic paraphernalia. A Suggestopedic teacher’s desk should be neat and organised, preferably with a vase of flowers.

Within the first two weeks of the academic year, I had administered the first journal writing exercise and mentioned in passing the imminent “100% essay” project. Within a further two weeks, I had completed most of my one-to-one interviews with students during which I recorded home language, “passion”, and career goal.

In addition, I began work on the Grade 9 mammoth “portfolio” project, which required a large number of shorter written pieces besides the compositions. Later in the term, we began reading Orwell’s (1945) *Animal Farm*.

With the Grade 11s, my biggest task in the first term was completing Shakespeare’s (c. 1600) *Romeo and Juliet*. And it is with respect to the field of teaching Shakespeare at high school that I wish to digress for a moment. I do so not only to give you an idea of the students’ experience in my classroom before we began the writing project but also to describe the Suggestopedic milieu in the lessons other than the creative writing sessions. Suggestopedia’s “accelerated” tempo allows me rapid teaching of literature so that more time is available for other components of the curriculum. Hence, I would like to share with other teachers of literature my own adaptation of Suggestopedia for teaching Shakespearian tragedy.

It was a method I had been developing since 1998 when I taught mother-tongue English students in Johannesburg, but it was also received favourably by my multilingual classes in Durban. The study of Shakespeare has been a regular component of the literature curriculum in South Africa for as far back as I can remember, and the Bard’s work, by reputation alone, is particularly challenging for all students because of its complexity, antique diction, and unfamiliar syntax. Yet Shakespeare continues to offer gripping plotlines and universal insights. I found in practice that my students’ understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare was enhanced by my Suggestopedic teaching method. The following section, then, describes this adaptation.

5.4 Suggestopedic Shakespeare: “Televopaedia”

Landing deftly on the bandwagon, I offer my own potentially commercial “brand identity” in the form of Televopaedia²⁴, a particularly visual adaptation of Lozanov’s method.

²⁴ Derived from Greek *τελεῖ* (far) and *παιδαγωγία* (science of teaching).

Suggestopedia offers so much towards the process of encoding into long-term memory that it would be a pity to limit its use to vocabulary development and foreign languages. In any case, as I hope is clear by now, a truly Suggestopedic “spirit” permeates every second of the classroom experience; it cannot be applied to only one theme, section, or component of the curriculum.

One segment of the senior English curriculum that does require a modicum of memorization is literature study. In particular, the “literary essay” requires students to show an overall knowledge of the plot, themes, characters, and nuances of a novel, play, or short story. Inspired by Lozanov (1978a) and Rose (1985), I have developed a “visual memory” system designed to give students instant mental “access” to the entire play and consequently to enable them to select appropriate evidence to substantiate their literary arguments.

I originally simply adapted the Suggestopedic method to teach Shakespeare to matric (Grade 12) classes. At first, I simply wondered if the classic split-page Suggestopedic textbook could be adapted to *Macbeth* and subsequently typed out a “translation” of the play into modern English (an example is figure 10 overleaf).

In my original classroom experiments, I began by providing a global overview of the story by presenting, on overhead projector, a series of pictures gleaned from various editions of the text such as figure 11 overleaf picturing Macduff and Malcolm’s victory.

Concert, I would try to read slowly enough for students to be able to refer to the modern English translation on the left. In practice, students complained that I read too quickly and that they did not in fact have time to do so. For Acts III to V, feeling that I was guilty of overkill, I came to abandon the Passive Concerts.

The biggest advantage for me was that this method, even without my lengthy “translation”, completely accelerated the pace of our progress. I could bank on completing a first reading in five hour-long sessions, one per act. More importantly, we didn’t stop to analyse each line, and my reading was natural and dramatic. The music added to the drama.

I have used this method several times to teach Shakespearian texts. Each time, I have a sense that students are following and enjoying the drama in their mind’s eyes. What convinced me most that this was a worthy pursuit was that I was free of the endless, dreaded, “line-by-line” analysis, post-mortem, dissection, and burial of the play, an approach that inevitably takes so long that it leaves the teacher little time to do anything else.

Rather, besides delivering a clear summary, I tried to “decode” trickier words, phrases, and speeches in advance of the “Concert Session” so that the reading session was uninterrupted, fluid, hopefully almost entirely comprehensible, and “accelerated”.

Since my first “Concert” attempts, however, I have added a further dimension to the procedure: a visual mnemonic for the whole play. I was inspired by the “Loci” mnemonic system, the origins of which, according to Rose (1985, 60-61), go back to Ancient Greece:

The first (mnemonic)...seems to have been devised by the Greek poet Simonides following a tragedy. Simonides was, according to Cicero, attending a victory banquet. He was called away in the middle of the festivities, just before the floor of the banqueting hall had collapsed, killing and mutilating the guests and rendering many of the bodies unrecognizable. Simonides was recalled and asked to help in the identification. He found he could do so by remembering where each (guest) had sat.

From this gruesome experience, he evolved the idea of visualising places in detail in order to then remember a list of things. In clarifying the method, Cicero explained

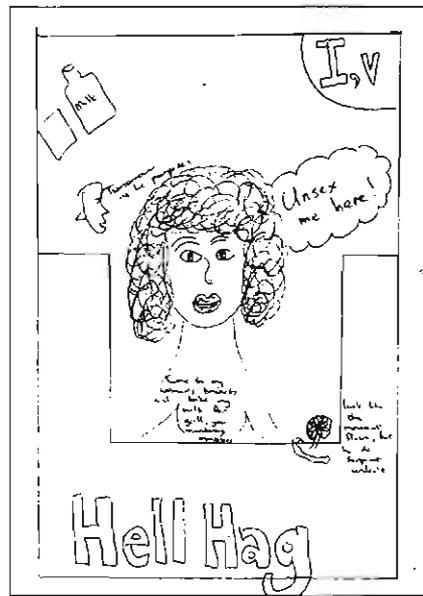


Figure 13. Mnemonic picture for Act I, Scene v of *Macbeth*

The “H” of Scene v stands for “Hell Hag”, a title referring to the sinister Lady Macbeth who is pictured voluptuously on the castle’s battlements, which form the upper part of the “H”.

The “letter pictures” are “summarized” on a master “visual summary” sheet. In this case, my examples are from *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, reproduced in Figures 14 and 15 overleaf. The “mnemonic sentences” are (for *Romeo and Juliet*) “Silly Juliet Takes Romeo Out”, and (for *Hamlet*) “Ghost Is Tiny Ophelia? No”. Once again, each letter from the mnemonic forms part of a picture. The main letter is a different size and in a different place for every frame of the “cartoon” making up the play’s scenes.

Indeed, one could begin this “visual summary” process by providing students an enigmatic skeleton version only showing the letters, and they could colour the rest vividly.

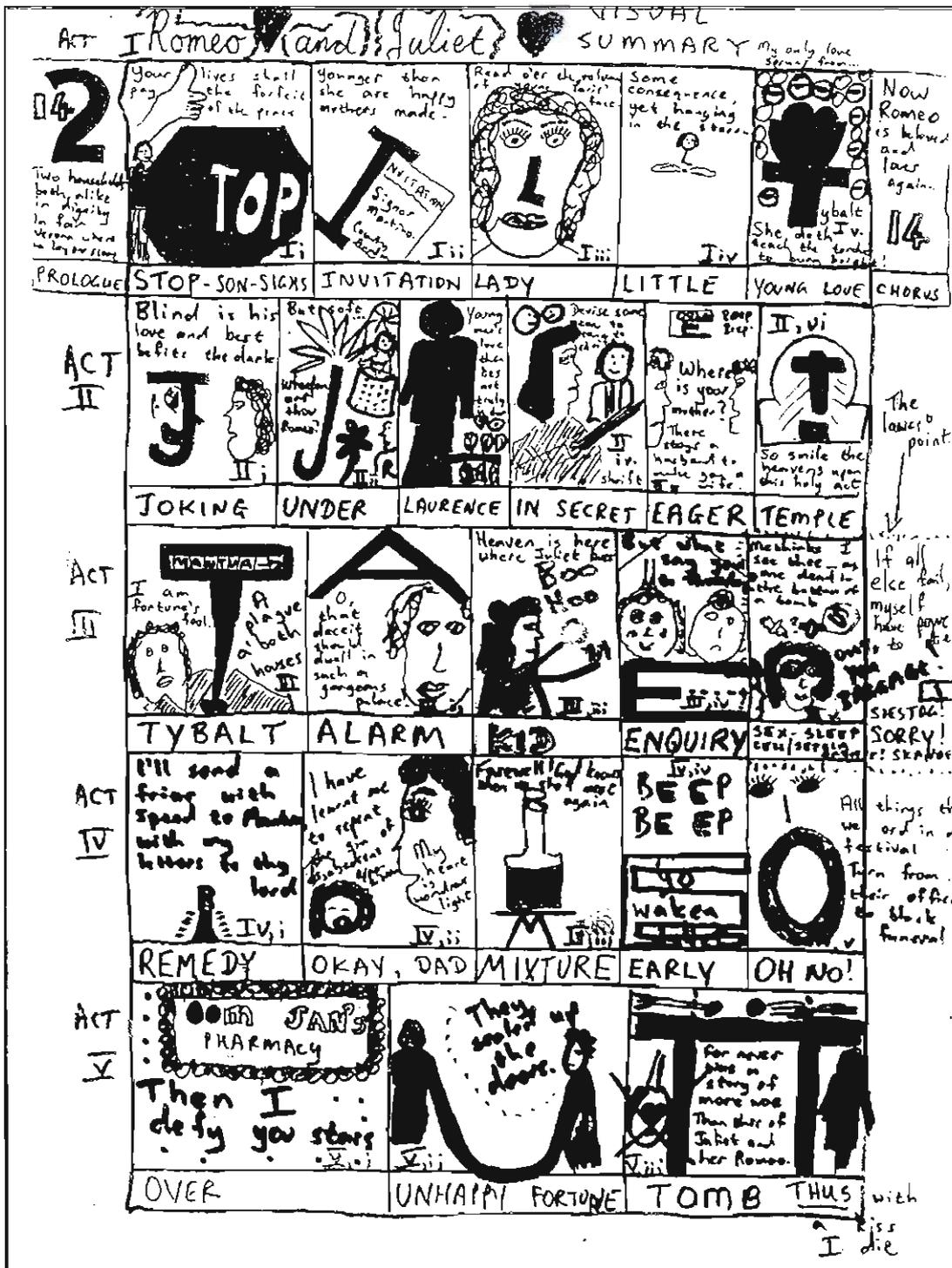


Figure 14. *Romeo and Juliet* visual summary

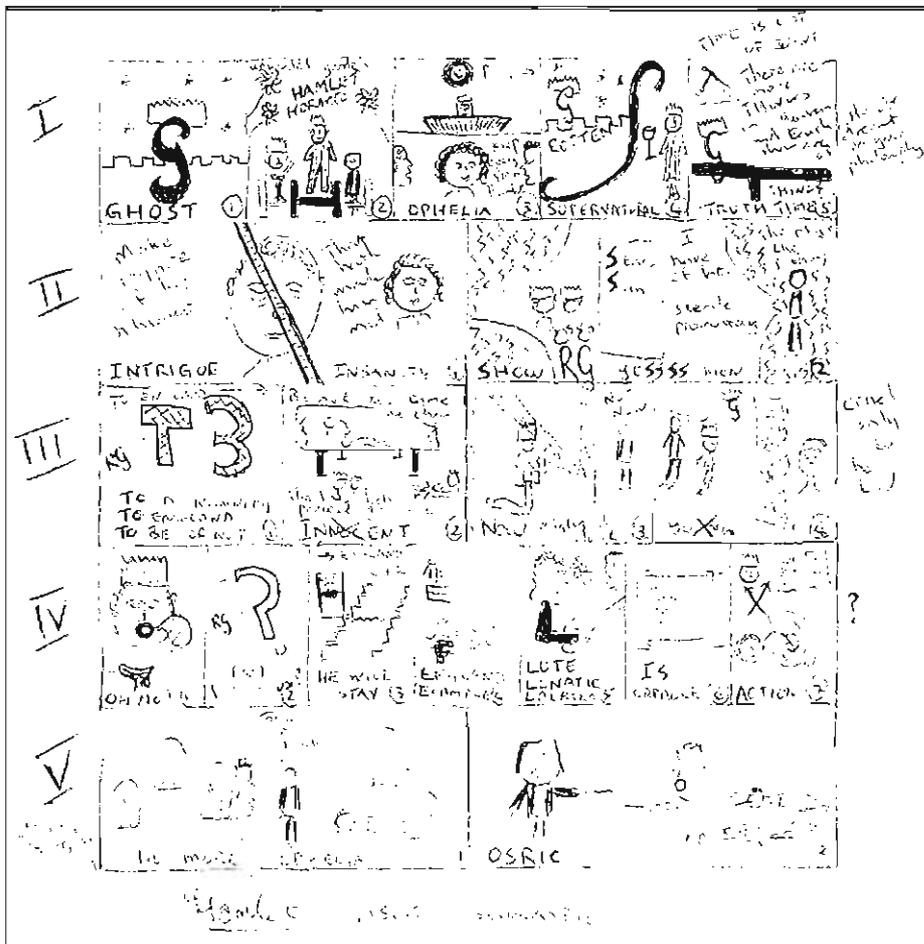


Figure 15. *Hamlet* visual summary

My “visual mnemonics” have received an enthusiastic response from my students. I cannot honestly say that I (or any colleague) have ever noted that my students’ answers on literature examinations have been in any way better than those of their peers taught in other ways. On the other hand, they do not seem to have been any worse either. In addition, I am pleased because the process has been enjoyable, I have not caused Shakespeare to turn in his grave for asphyxiating his play, and I have more time to spend on other areas of the curriculum.

In theory, when writing their “literary essays”, students can visualize (or re-draw) the mnemonic picture, recall the relevant scenes, and select appropriate evidence for their

arguments. The method has certainly succeeded for yours truly, who can now, in something of the manner of a sideshow performer, listen to any extract from *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet* and name the Act and Scene.

While the Grade 9s did not have such a “full” visual experience of *Animal Farm* as I had created for the Shakespearian tragedy, I did devise a simpler visual summary of the novel for them. During the Concert Sessions, both classes were exposed to a chalkboard crammed with columns of vocabulary items, some of which I had already included elsewhere in my lessons. Between these items, I also eventually added further positive affirmations. In my opinion, the colourful posters and busy chalkboard created a rich environment in which students felt immersed in language (and hopefully not drowning in words!)

Thus, although we started working on the “100% essay” in January, by the time we began the Concert Sessions phase, students had been exposed to Suggestopedic techniques (visual learning, attention paid to seemingly insignificant details such as a personal greeting at the door, an environment of “peripheral” stimulation, and Shakespearian text read to a musical background) for some months. My classroom, then, was already infused with Suggestopedic elements, and my students were familiar with my particularly visual teaching style.

Having described the Suggestopedic elements in the environment and outlined my Suggestopedic methodology for teaching Shakespeare, I return now to the project per se.

5.5 The Lessons

As I began the series of lessons I had planned, I became aware once again of how my perception of “good” writing differed from that of many of my students, who tended to believe that “good writing” was merely text with neither spelling errors nor profanity. Classroom discussions with some students indicated that the English Second Language

lessons in their previous “township” schools had been “traditional” and based on grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

As usual, almost all students participated enthusiastically in the Poster Making session. In the past, I have “bribed” students to create these posters by declaring them to be “for marks”. It seems that, in many cases, such extortion is not necessary. In my experience, while some older students might make snide comments about the “childish” crayons, the majority of junior and senior high school students usually participate enthusiastically and take satisfaction from seeing their work displayed.

I provided a list of obvious ideas for “peripheral” posters to teach writing: Focus, Detail, Colour, Taste, and so on. I invited students to choose one of these ideas or create a poster “advertising” a different writing technique or even simply making a positive statement such as “I am a winner”.

The following extract from my field notes (Appendix C) describes some of the posters submitted:

Poster project going well. Besides the expected “focus”, “detail” etc., other creations include “Zoom In”, “Challenge”, “By aiming for the impossible, we achieve the best possible”, “Beauty is in the inside”, “Unique”, “I am sexy”, “Be accurate and simple” “Brand Names”, “Smell”, “Taste”, “Imagery”, “Love”, “I am a Winner”, “If he can do it, so can I”, “Just Imagine”, “Work for it”, “Show, don’t tell”, “Believe in Yourself”, “Colour” “Passion”, “Live and Have Fun”, and my favourite: “There’s a million rand for everyone; you just have to use your mind to find it.”

I can see that most of them have really enjoyed this. Some of the posters don’t make sense, and some just don’t work well at all. But many students have risen to the challenge.

As I did not yet have a “name” for my classroom, I also invited posters that would give the room more identity than its prosaic “B12” designation. When I studied Suggestopedia at Stellenbosch University, Uti Bodenstien’s lecture room was not just a lecture room; it was “Fantasien”, and it was different from the start. While I could not provide Ms. Bodenstien’s couches or sound system, I could name my classroom. “Fantasia” was too obvious (and maybe too flowery for a male teacher). I considered “Jungle Room” and

“Brain Club” but had not yet decided. I hoped at least one student would have a good suggestion.

One of the posters submitted read simply “WILDRoom”. I decided that this would be perfect as the name of my classroom and displayed the poster through the glass above the door. I discovered later that “Wild Room” is actually a children’s television programme, but I was fond of the name and now had a “Fantasien” of my own.

After we had completed the posters, I introduced the concept of what I called the “100% essay”. This was to be an ongoing project in which students would choose their own topics in consultation with me and edit and re-edit them until I awarded them the full 100%. My students seemed intrigued by the idea, and, within a fortnight, all students had selected topics and were working on the first drafts of their essays, which I discuss in the following section.

5.6 First Drafts: Towards Passion, Focus, Sincerity, and Originality

Some of the first drafts submitted were mere replicas of the sort of “lectures” the students tended to write in their examinations, such as “There are many different kinds of music”. Others were too “scattered” and needed further focus to attain an “in-the-moment” quality.

In assessing them, I simply circled words, sentences, or paragraphs that I thought had the potential to become subjects of more focused pieces of writing. Sometimes, I added a written suggestion too. In some cases, I spent lengthy periods of time questioning a student at my desk before we found a suitable “topic”.

In something of an “Accelerated Learning” tradition, while discussing content and structure “one-on-one” with a student, I sketched pictures within a sequence of rectangles, one per paragraph, each showing the setting, characters, details, and focus of the relevant paragraph. In discussing setting, I began the slow process of teasing out the details about

the setting and representing them on my sketch. Each of drawings represented the student's visual memory of the scene.

During this project, I sometimes drew only the picture representing the Introduction and suggested that the student wrote that and "see what happens". At other times, I went through the entire essay "plan" like this so that the student had a clear "road map" before he began the odyssey of writing. This is surely consistent with Lozanov's approach of providing a "big picture" before (and while) one tackles the details.

It took me some time to convince some of these students that, at this stage, I was not interested in whether or not they could spell. I simply wanted them to find and describe an exhilarating or meaningful experience upon which to focus their writing.

Some keen students wrote several drafts each term and showed real progress. Some had to be coerced into submitting anything at all and made little progress. Some took keenly to my suggestions; others simply dredged up another "first draft" no better than the previous one. I had to move on to the next phase of the project, however: the two "Concert" sessions.

5.7 The Concerts

I selected the texts for this exercise rather arbitrarily. In the frenzy of a busy school day, I hastily selected from the original writing section of a school magazine (the same one, in fact, in which Jessica's "Beauts and the Beasties" article is published) what I thought were the four best essays.

For the first two, I created a crude imitation of the split-page model (with writing "concepts" named in the right-hand "column"). An example appears overleaf as Figure 16. The other essays were printed exactly as they were in the original magazine.



Figure 16. Adaptation of Suggestopedic split-page format to teach creative writing

I ran the Concerts over two lessons. In the first, after a short relaxation exercise, I delivered both "Active" and "Passive" Concerts; that is I read both essays twice. In the second lesson, students followed the third and fourth essays while I read them only once with a slow baroque background.

Delivering the First Concert to different classes, I experimented with different music ranging from Haydn's²⁵ Symphony No. 88 in G (1787) to an instrumental version of Wagner's prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. (1859). For the second concerts (and the combined approach used in the second lesson), I used primarily the Bach and Vivaldi slow movements from "Baroque Guitar Concerti" (Garcia, Cassovia and Breiner, 1990),

²⁵ This again raises the spectre of cultural relativism and Eurocentrism. Further research, beyond the limitations of this project, should investigate the use of music of non-European origin in the classroom.

As is the case of journal sessions and *Macbeth* read to Beethoven, I feel that music definitely adds a sense of expectancy and occasion to the lesson. And after the Baroque guitar Passive Concert, even some of the most hyperactive of students remained slumped on their desks while I drank up the sudden and unexpected freedom from the burden of constant behavioural supervision. Whether this was hypnosis, the “alpha state”, or Lozanov’s “concentrative psychorelaxation” was the last question on my mind. Standing at the door and looking at the immobile students, my initial reaction was that, whether or not the music would help students to write better, it worked extremely efficiently in calming them down.

After the jarring interruption of this reverie by the end-of-period bell, some students complained that I had put them to sleep. Others were impressed by the effect of the music.

Students enjoyed some of the texts. In my rapid scanning of these essays before I had them printed, though, I had overlooked a certain racial, patronising quality in the tone of one essay. Before I read the essays, then, I asked students to see if they could spot this, and many did so. Indeed, my selection of essays can be justifiably criticised as being inappropriately lily-white. Indeed, had I not referred repeatedly in my “lecture” sessions to an ex-student’s essay entitled “Sunset in Soweto”, I would be completely embarrassed by my colonial selection. The essays collected for this project, however, give me many resources for future projects.

5.8 The “Final” Draft

The day after the Concert Sessions, I made a point of not wasting any time. I greeted the students and told them they had that lesson and the evening at home to complete their final drafts. I played Mozart for the rest of the lesson and got on with my administrative work.

A cursory glimpse at the essays was most promising. I saw that the diversity of experience in my classroom offered a great deal of potential and that my Suggestopedic intervention had indeed enriched, elicited, and encouraged the literary display of such experience.

The remainder of this chapter will analyse the work submitted in more detail. While I include some statistics, I hope that the reader will be convinced at the success of the intervention by the spirit and passion of the essays themselves, which are reproduced in their entirety in Appendix D.

5.9 Analysis of Data

The only difference between my approach to the two grades was in the editing afforded to the students' work: I chose to give the Grade 9 students the benefit of a little more teacher editing while I tried to minimize my editing of Grade 11 compositions. In doing so, I hoped to give readers of this dissertation a “feel” of students' both “raw” and polished work.

I also abandoned the interview idea after a couple of one-on-one conversations with students, who had mostly, I thought, already stated their opinions in their journals. While I shall discuss the journal data in section 5.11 below, I move now towards discussing the quality of the students' “prose compositions”.

In deciding which essays to type out for inclusion in the appendices to this dissertation, I realised that I could, in a sense, turn this decision into a quantitative measure. If the main

criterion for “success” in this project was publication, the strength of the project might be indicated by the proportion of students’ compositions I deemed fit to include in the appendices. In a normal pile (“exam” or otherwise), I would usually be hard-pressed to find more than two.

Bearing in mind that some compositions were bound to express similar themes and might hence be rejected on the grounds of repetition rather than insincerity, this proportion, as a measure of “success”, was bound to be conservative. Even students whose work was not published may have gained skills from the intervention.

I began the process of applying these criteria by removing all pieces that seemed insincere, “unreal”, or plagiarised. Second, as I have noted, I rejected pieces that were similar to other pieces I had selected. I made the final selection by deciding whether each piece fulfilled one or more of the criteria as listed in Figure 9 in the previous chapter. Indeed, as I had expected, the “X-factor” and “publishability” overcame all opposition as the most significant factors. I defend the “X-factor” as an essential criterion as “gut feel” is a crucial part of the appreciation of any art. And, in deciding upon the “publishability” of the work, I asked myself whether the composition was likely to be of interest to a world audience. I did also, however, recognise essays that filled one or more of the other criteria, such as focus and sincerity.

To provide a fuller picture, I also typed out one or two essays as examples of the work of students who did not appear to gain any new skills from the intervention. I have not included these in the statistics below.

Hence, the following data:

Out of 89 Grade 9 students, I chose to include the work of 25 (28, 6%), and

Out of 69 Grade 11 students, I chose to include the work of 22 (32%).

My tentative claim, thus, is that at least about 30% of students in my classes developed and refined their writing skills and gained inspiration to write something I thought was worthy of inclusion.

Only nebulous inferences can be drawn from the following comparison of students' final grades for the "100%" essay (written over three drafts and with Suggestopedic and "conventional" teacher input as well as the qualitative evaluations of their peers or even friends and family) with those scored in end-of-term writing "examinations" (written in one hour and with no assistance).

Out of 158 students, 25 "100% essays" (16%) were awarded grades lower than the same students' "exam" essays; 32 students (20%) scored the same grades; and 103 students (64%) scored higher. These figures may indicate that some students learned enough about composition writing during the intervention for this skill to be maintained during a "controlled" writing exercise.

As I have stressed, however, I would prefer to convince the reader qualitatively, which I attempt to do in the following section.

5.10 "Literary" Analysis of Students' Work Submitted

One particularly pleasing result of the project was the number of seemingly apathetic students who produced pleasing work for their final drafts. For some students, however, the intervention had no noticeable effect. The first section of this analysis will evaluate the essays submitted from the perspective of use of effective writing techniques. The second section will evaluate the writing submitted from a thematic perspective.

5.10.1 Writing "Skills" Analysis

The skill of using detail was, in my opinion, the one that most students understood and implemented. Almost every student's work shows some attempt to include detail in the writing, and many show an attempt to write focused work.

Figure 17 below outlines some examples of the use of effective detail and "in-the-moment" focus from the essays submitted. The essay numbers refer to the essays as they are reproduced in Appendix D.

Extract	Comment
The priest was not even finished saying "Usu gambamba uNkosikazi Wakho" (which means "You may kiss the bride"), and my brother-in-law had already climbed on top of my sister. (Essay 1)	This opening line is immediately "in-the-moment" and depicts a situation that arouses the reader's interest immediately. The use of isiZulu adds local flavour.
The only thing you could hear was the chickens from next door. The people who were alive and walking were me and my mother. She was wearing her silk nightdress with the yellow roses. (Essay 3)	The next door chickens take the reader immediately into this rural "moment", and the visual detail about the nightdress is effective.
I had just finished my breakfast cereal when I heard a knock at the front door. I was 100% sure that it was my best friend Siyabonga, the tall dark boy from four blocks away who's only interested in playing stupid computer games. ...He was so tall that when I opened the door, I faced a gigantic shadow blocking me from the sun. He was wearing a blue T-shirt and jeans with black shoes. (Essay 6)	The details about the breakfast cereal and the four blocks situate this piece in a "moment". The details about Siyabonga's clothing show that this writer is thinking visually.
We entered the mouth of the valley. The mountains towered above us. It was dark outside, and in the van too. My little brother was asleep on my Dad's lap. There were a few other men in the van with us; I could hear the two men next to me saying how late it was and that the van was slow. The man next to me had a deep voice, and his breath smelled of beer. Earlier on, he had asked me if I wanted a sip of beer, but my Dad had refused. The man had laughed and said that I'd be a man if I had some, but I knew he was just joking. (Essay 8)	The details about the valley, mountain, and van give this piece an immediate setting very efficiently. The details about the man's voice and beer smell express the writer's feelings elegantly.
I got out of the car and stepped onto the reddish tar. I was wearing my white Polo shirt and my blue Polo jeans. A red BMW M3 drove past, with silver mags and red-tinted windows. I said goodbye to my father and closed the door of the car. (Essay 11)	The details about the tar, car, and clothing paint an immediate "in-the-moment" picture.
I was awakened by two things his morning: the noise of the vibration of my cellphone and the sweet smell of my Gran's incense sticks filled	The writing is focused and "in-the-moment" with the

<p>with the rich smells of India. My Gran came into the room to see if I was up. Lucky enough I was almost ready since I had just come out of the bath and did my seven-oil bath and now it was time for me to get dressed and join the rest of the family. This year was different, though. My parents were not going to join in the festivities this year because they had converted to Christianity, and there I was torn between two worlds. (Essay 32)</p>	<p>details about the cellphone and incense sticks. These two visual details are cleverly iconic of the writer's cultural dilemma.</p>
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Figure 17. Examples of detailed, "in-the-moment" writing from the work submitted.

Many essays were not included in the Appendices because, despite the copious detail, they lacked inspiration or a coherent theme. In editing the final drafts, I often had the urge to prune away excessive detail. In the case of the Grade 9 students, I did just that in many cases. To a great extent, though, for the sake of allowing the reader to see both edited and unedited work, I tried to limit my editing of the Grade 11 work.

In the second part of this analysis, I have divided the essays into thematic categories.

5.10.2 *Thematic Analysis*

5.10.2.1 *Suburban Bliss and Otherwise*

Many of the essays I chose for publication focused on the author's suburb of residence. Despite the many "Umlazi" titles, each writer offers a fresh perspective. In "Umlazi" (Essay 2), the writer's use of detail (street names, clothing, the Vanilla Coke) adds to the evocative atmosphere.

Ahead of me was a narrow road called Kwandosi Road. I stopped at Mthunziwesizwe Store and bought a can of Vanilla Coke. Opposite the shop, Mrs Ndlovu was cleaning her windowsills; they looked sbiny.

Essay 4 offers detail (samp), and disturbing social comment in "Home Sweet Home". The effectiveness of this work resides in the criminal activity being described as almost another household routine:

I enter my home, say hi to the family, and go to the fridge looking for food. I eat a bowl of my favourite food: samp. Then I wash my shirt and socks. What am I going to do next? Go out on my bike?

On my way out, I see a young man running with a DVD. He must have stolen it. Out of nowhere, a group of men catches him using whatever they can find as weapons. They hit him. He bleeds.

I don't blame them for hitting him; we are tired of criminals. Hitting them is the only way to get to the gangsters.

Further evidence of the crime witnessed by our teenagers is found in "Life in Chesterville" (Essay 13) and "Untitled" (Essay 47). "Nigerians in my Hometown, South Beach" (Essay 49) is refreshing in that it offers a balanced view despite increasing xenophobia in our country.

I wonder how a foreigner who is a fugitive with no money is able to survive in such an expensive neighbourhood. Vincent, one of my Nigerian friends, owns a magnificent silver 325i BMW with cutting-edge audio, a flat, and two businesses: a cellphone shop and a bar. He tells me: "You have to strive for success by working your way to the top; you have to grab every opportunity that comes your way."

I was especially pleased with "New Year in Umlazi" (Essay 19), particularly its evocative olfactory detail: "The air smells of meat and barbeque sauce".

Essay 23 explores the feelings of a child going to live in the suburbs after a lifetime in the "township" with sincerity and credible detail. The "neatly-trimmed green gardens and perfectly pruned hedges" detail says a lot about her feelings about going to live in a "white" area:

As we arrived in Glenwood, I saw that everything was different. There was no Spaza Shop, Zulu-named roads, or kids playing on the corner. There were large houses with neatly-trimmed green gardens and perfectly pruned hedges. And it was so quiet, as though no-one lived there!

I am pleased also with the interesting verb "bread-and-battered" in "The Study Guide of My Way Home" (Essay 25).

Further evocative descriptions of Umlazi are offered by Essay 26 which celebrates the ordinary details the writer observes in her suburb: "On the way home, I take out a two-rand coin and buy three packets of Snappers and five sweets from the woman in the torn skirt".

Essay 35 is alive with nostalgia, and “Inthuthuko Restaurant” (Essay 37) is probably almost as good as frequenting this establishment for a drink or smoke. “A Day in the Township” (Essay 39) is, for me, completely credible, and “The Corner of Luthuli and Zulu Roads” (Essay 53) paints a vivid portrait of “Teabozo, the Chicken Dust man” and his milieu: “He has taken his T-shirt off, and he is sweating. The chicken is burning in the orange flames of a drum of an old car”.

These nostalgic (or not!) memoirs are culturally alive, sincere, and real, a far cry from the kind of writing some students created when they were simply trying to spell correctly.

5.10.2.2 *Physical Exhilaration, Love, and Lust*

In “The Beach” (Essay 3), the writer has not yet achieved a fully focused piece, but his work does show an attempt to involve the reader in a “moment” that is cold and wet: “I ran into the broken ice of the sea. I could feel my insides starting to freeze, but I knew I could make it. One arm after the other, then breathe. The water was freezing.”

In “Seven o’ Clock Sharp” (Essay 12), the writer successfully takes the reader with him on a bumpy bike ride, and the gustatory thrill of the “...braaied chicken with beer poured on it” in “The Big One” (Essay 14) almost makes me drool every time I read it:

One student wrote many drafts to complete “The Battle of the Blues” (Essay 16) and was one of those writers whose work I pruned of excessive detail. He has successfully used the present tense in his description of the soccer match, and his description of the goalkeeper is real and gritty: “Our goalkeeper Sifiso puts the football on the grass. Then he wipes his sweaty face with his T-shirt and moves six steps back as if he is going to kick the ball into the clouds.”

“V.R.6” (Essay 45) is not always clear, but it does show passion: “2 Fast 2 Furious, gravel heat burn them thighs black G-funk on. Damn! She’s furious ready to start the ignition. In

common grounds there she stars her night fusion.” I am not sure whether the unusual syntax here is intentional or if it is a function of the “second language” designation of the writer, but the result is poetically sexy.

“My First Kiss” (Essay 44) is sophisticated and surprising. For me, it raises the question of appropriateness in school writing. When we are working on essays, I am in something of a quandary. My “prudish schoolteacher” alter ego blushes and wants students to distinguish between what is “appropriate” and what is not. My “maverick writer” personality, on the other hand, wants student writers to break boundaries and write whatever they want to write. When this topic was raised in class, I pointed out to students that, in my own writing, if a four-letter word is the best one for the job, I do not hesitate to use it. I urged discretion, however, and a sense of appropriateness. The writing in Essay 44 is sultry and sensuous even if influenced by pulp fiction: “My body was static and motionless when suddenly, after a long time of desire, our lips met. The lips I touched were warm and wet; this was what we both wanted.”

Interestingly, only two of the other 54 essays selected for inclusion explore the theme of teenage love. One untitled work (Essay 6) successfully makes one empathize with the shy, would-be lover, and “How Love Changes the World around You” (Essay 41) effectively describes more than one moment of epiphany.

5.10.2.3 *Celebrating the Ordinary*

I was pleased with the essays that celebrated seemingly trivial “slices” from the writers’ lives²⁶. This is significant because, as I intimated above, it was something of a battle to make some students believe that their lives were interesting enough to write about.

²⁶ Like Ndebele’s (1986) essay on Rediscovering the Ordinary in South Africa, such writing is occurring in post-apartheid writing about life in South Africa.

In “Late for School” (Essay 7), the writer successfully focuses his text on the minutes after he has awoken. In “Sunset” (Essay 17), the writer communicates vivid sensory images with the finesse of a poet: “The grass beneath our feet started to come alive with miniature diamonds of dew. The ever-changing colours of the sunset reflected in the diamonds.”

“Early Morning” (Essay 22) has for me a Zen quality (“As usual, I fill the bath first with warm water then with cold”) reminiscent of William Carlos Williams’ “The Red Wheelbarrow”:

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

I was delighted to see that my Suggestopedic intervention had inspired so many students to find the confidence to write about these “slices” of “ordinary” life.

5.10.2.4 *Nostalgia, Conflict, and Lost Parents*

“The Last Touch” (Essay 10) is poignant and makes the reader hang on until the last line, and “The Day My Dad Came Back” (Essay 27) is redolent with olfactory delights: “On this particular day, my gran was baking choc chip biscuits. I can remember how they smelt and tasted especially better because the house was bubbling with happiness and love.”

“My Beautiful Childhood” (Essay 29) displays warm nostalgia and effectively sees the world as from a child’s perspective: “We drive away to the ice cream parlour where I order a chocolate chip ice cream with a cherry on top, and each day ends as miraculously as I want it to end.”

“Rage of Conflicts” (Essay 32) is about the writer’s conflict between the religion she was born into and the adopted religion of her parents. The details in “My Father” (Essay 36) effectively communicate quite a lot about the father in a very short space: “On the wall was a big red, green, and yellow picture of a lion holding a flag. Next to that was a Bob Marley poster with smoke coming out of his mouth. Behind the door was a big poster of Mike Tyson wearing his fighting clothes and red gloves on his hands.”

“He’s Gone” (Essay 42) is a real cry of yearning for the writer’s father:

It’s time to sleep, but I can’t. I hear the hustle of the angry wind. Raindrops blow in the window sprinkling wet on my face as I try to fall asleep. My head is filled with thoughts I can’t control. As soon as I close my eyes, I see his face fresh in my mind, so I open them immediately and step back to reality. I wait for his gentle footsteps to enter my room and his smell will soon follow. I sit up and stare at the door, but all I can see is the big poster of Beckham.

Come on dad, turn out my lights and press a kiss on my forehead. I shouldn’t have opened my eyes because he’d still be there in my thoughts, but I did open them...and the truth is: he’s gone!

Many essays wax nostalgic for the rural lifestyles the writers have experienced when visiting relatives. Two untitled pieces (Essays 8 and 52) take readers on long-distance South African taxi rides to rural areas. In “My Interesting Days in Eastern Cape” (Essay 34), the writer transports us most successfully to a remote farm:

Everyone in the house was very happy because I had come to visit. We sat at the fireplace while Auntie cooked us porridge. After breakfast, my sisters mopped and polished the house until it was shiny clean. I went out with my cousins to take out the cows and goats from the kraal to the grazing fields; you could see the cows’ stomachs moving around while they were digesting their food. After they had finished eating, we took them to the river.

“My Beautiful Farm” (Essay 40) is simple yet effective, and “Christmas in Empangeni” (Essay 50) is a vivid illustration of how the simplest of pleasures can be enormously satisfying: “Everything was ready at the table; I could smell the meat of the cow that had been slaughtered early in the morning. We also had some pork and lamb. There was also puthu, beans, mielies, and stiff pap.”

5.10.2.5 African Cultural Heritage

“The Sangoma” (Essay 51) includes a successful attempt to capture the atmosphere of the witchdoctor’s room. The details about the sangoma’s voice and hair constitute effective imagery.

I looked up to see an ugly monkey. It didn’t move, so I assumed it must be Death. I took a breath and tried to relax. He called me and said “Mfuna come closer”. His voice was rough like he was talking from a distance. We sat down on the floor. He was looking down; I couldn’t see his face because the braids in his hair were blocking it. He was carrying a stick with feathers in his right hand: iSheba leZangoma.

Essays 38 and 48 colourfully describe traditional Zulu ceremonies. The food the writer describes in Essay 48 makes for effective writing because it is indexical of the wedding she is attending: “On the table are chicken, inyama yengulube, steak, sauce, salad, iphapha, rice, and dessert. The meaty smell is delicious. I don’t feel like eating because I am too excited.”

In general, I felt that my students had learnt a great deal about the construction and style of descriptive and narrative compositions. I included a minority of pieces for completely different reasons, however.

I was interested to see how many students maintained or improved the standard of their writing in the end-of-term essay²⁷ following the submission of the “100% essays”.

From the work submitted by my other four classes, I have included a few of the “exam” essays. Some are disappointing regressions, I think, to the banal “lectures” usually dished up by students for these exams. For me, one writer’s “The Government Does Not Care

²⁷ One of my two Grade 11 classes, however, did not write this examination and was given an Accounting test instead without my being consulted about this.. Was the “suggestion” here that English is more dispensable than Accounting?

About Crime in South Africa” (Essay 24) does not come close to matching the feeling of the same writer’s “Umlazi to Glenwood” piece (Essay 23).

On the other hand, another writer’s piece based on “Picture No. 2” (Essay 43) is as good, I think, as “My Masks”, one of two essays to which I actually awarded the full “100%”. Other students submitted both effective “100%” and “exam” essays.

While the “exam” essays suggest that most students have not yet internalised enough knowledge about narrative convention to transfer their new skills to an “exam” set-up with a choice of stimulatory topics, I am gratified that many did create compositions vastly superior to those they had submitted under previous “exam” conditions. As my field notes reveal, such “exam conditions” included, in addition to the obligatory silence, a “bag search” for contraband that pupils might be bringing to school for consumption during the subsequent picnic. The two essays to which I awarded the full “100%” are reproduced in Appendix F and discussed below.

“How My Day Was Spoiled” (Essay 1) is effective in its combination of simple style and disturbing subject matter, but it is, for me, unforgettable. From the graphic detail presented in the first paragraph (“Early this morning, I saw a dead cat lying on the side of the road with all its fur taken off... already ants were starting to eat its eyes”) to the discussion between the woman and her friend (“They could have at least left him his underwear”), the piece takes the reader by surprise throughout.

“My Masks” (Essay 2) is frank and sad, but it says a great deal about the writer’s life. His brutal honesty about nefarious activities in which he has been involved gives the piece an immediate “gut appeal”. His writing has an impressive clarity and sincerity that make it quite riveting:

As I enter the yard, I put on my sad, traumatized mask. For I know that whatever will happen inside the house, I will take the blame for it; every little incident that occurs at home will come back to me. Living with an older brother and his girlfriend can be extremely stressful. My brother, who has looked after most of the family affairs as I grew up, has certainly changed due to the evil witch- his girlfriend.

5.11 Analysis of Students' Journal Comments

Another successful outcome of the journal writing was that it helped to bring life, flavour and an “in the-moment” quality to many of the compositions submitted. Strangely enough, that “Zen” quality is usually absent in students’ “formal”, to-be-graded writing but often found in students’ journals:

It second period and it nearly break all I'm thinking about is food nothing but food. My head is tired and so are my hands what about my tummy it rumbling and it needs food right now.

What I'm going to do now is keep on writing so I can try to forget that I'm hungry. I can't do it man I'm so hungry I can gobble down Maria and a whole cow at the same time. The bell is about to ring 10 minutes left and counting 10, 9, 8 you can carry on for me.

The student comments (reproduced in Appendix E) show that most students enjoyed the environment, teaching style, and music. Students had the option of signing their comments or submitting them anonymously. Even those students whose writing appears not to have improved have responded positively. My favourite comments include:

- “...the room which I'm in is full of idea's and creativity”,
- “...the thing I love the most is that the teacher uses your drawings to fill the class and I must say this is the most intresting (sic) class in the whole school”,
- “...the minute we enter we hear the sounds of soft, peaceful music And a slight whisper of a lady's voice straight away I was excited and ready to do what ever work was requested of us”,
- “...(t)he sound makes your brain go to thinking mode and makes your brain assess every sentence that leaves your mind mistakeless and almost perfect, the music is so soothing”,
- “...it doesn't feel like High School it feels like tertiary” ,
- “...there are just a few ingredients missing for my writing to be 101%”,
- “...maybe next year I'll release a book called My Reflection, I'm still working on it. Its basically about a girl who has no friends and she's very insecure about her life” , and
- “...when you write an essay you shouldn't tell them what was happening but show them with your writing”.

The journal comments clearly indicate that some students were stimulated by the posters in the “brain-friendly” environment, but a close inspection of all the journal comments in Appendix E shows that a minority of students found them distracting.

Many journal comments reveal that students have gained at least some new writing skills from the intervention. One student's comment, for example, shows his pleasure in response to his work.

I think I am quite satisfied with the criticism I got. It was a matter of just arranging a few grammar mistakes, a title, and putting more detail and focus into it. I was more than happy with the compliments I got because it showed I had done atleast something that was worth my while. I know now that when you're something to someone or just writing a book or essay that to always concertrate and you'll really get best results for sure.

I know it's not perfect yet but I got the idea that I could just get there with a push in the right direction I heard some wonderful essay's and heard what real detail is. I didn't know that I could put detail on something but I got a compliment on it so everything seems to be looking up.

Although, again, a minority of students' comments reveal that they found the music irritating, most show a positive response to the use of music in the classroom: "I love it when we play sir's music although at the beginning I though it was boring but now I know the reason for that kind of music, it for us to relax and think of the work we are doing or listening to".

The journal comments also reveal that students have responded positively to the use of music and art. One writer's comment that his aim extends beyond "full marks" to "101%" may show that the intervention has successfully "de-suggested" the idea that his abilities as a writer are limited. I hope also that the journal comments give the reader a still clearer flavour of that "X factor" embodied in the Suggestopedic classroom.

I hope that this chapter has persuaded the reader that the combination of a positive teacher attitude with appropriate peripheral stimulation, an exciting learning environment, and meditative music has inspired writing that is vivid, topical, and "alive" as opposed to the dry, formula-derived work produced by students who are merely writing because they have been told to do so.

The final chapter of the dissertation reflects upon the project from educational, neurological, and personal perspectives and suggests a way forward for teachers who wish to explore further this powerful combination of visuals and music.

Reflections

The suddenness of the leap from hardware to software cannot but produce a period of anarchy and collapse, especially in the developed countries.

-Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

Dreams surely are difficult, confusing, and not everything in them is brought to pass for mankind. For fleeting dreams have two gates: one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Those which pass through the one of sawn ivory are deceptive, bringing tidings which come to nought, but those which issue from the one of polished horn bring true results when a mortal sees them.

-Homer (c. 750 B.C.)

Nobody teaches a writer anything. You tell them what you know. You tell them to find their voice and stick with it, because that's all you have in the end. You tell the ones who have it to keep at it and you tell the ones who don't to keep at it, too. Because that's the only way to get where you're going.

-Grady Tripp, from the film The Wonder Boys (2000)

In this chapter, I argue that Suggestopedia is worthy of being taken seriously because it is a teaching methodology that actually attempts to provide the brain with optimum stimulation in creating fast and efficient learning. In the first section, I reflect on the success of the “100% Essay Project” from an educational point of view. Second, I do so from a neurological standpoint. Finally, I offer a personal reflection in which I argue that university education departments need to take Suggestopedia seriously.

6.1 Educational Reflection

Suggestopedia is a practical and effective classroom methodology. If teachers are specialists in the art of presenting information dynamically and efficiently, Suggestopedia

offers them an effective methodology for doing just that. This first reflection articulates the appeal of Suggestopedia from an educational perspective.

What more can we ask from a methodology than its claim to add “joy” to learning? Lozanov’s inviting, bright, and exciting learning environment cleverly sends a positive message and begins the “teaching” even before the teacher has opened his mouth. The use of student-created posters in students’ “peripheral” perception as a “subliminal” teaching device is a powerful tool drawn from the advertising industry. Suggestopedia provides students with an experience of success and competence from the first lesson and thus supplies a positive association with education.

It is clear that the Suggestopedic teacher has high expectations of students. These expectations in themselves, a kind of placebo effect, are designed to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, a cycle of success. The Suggestopedic teacher’s words agree with the messages he displays non-verbally, and Suggestopedia’s use of music has a calming and relaxing effect on students and teacher.

Suggestopedia’s “multisensory” input stimulates students with “multiple intelligences” and provides information to the brain via music, art, dramatic speech, and tactile games. Concepts to be processed are thus strengthened, and Suggestopedia refuses to accept limitations in its perception of students’ abilities.

Suggestopedia strikes an effective balance between teacher warmth and authority. The Suggestopedic teacher’s words are aligned with his non-verbal messages. Suggestopedia integrates “left” and “right” brain activity. The Suggestopedic textbook is designed to allow optimum understanding and effortless recall. The Suggestopedic “cycle” allows for “difficult” material to be decoded in advance of its appearance in the lesson. The imaginative games presented in Suggestopedia’s “Activations” are an enjoyable way of rehearsing and strengthening new information.

In this project, the colourful “writing tips” posters helped remind students to focus their essays, to include sensory images, and to inject personal passion. Together with the music, these posters created an inviting learning environment conducive to creative writing.

Making the goal of the assignment the achievement of the full “100%” suggested my high expectations to my students, and my classroom demeanour hopefully suggested my confidence that this was an easily achievable goal.

I believe that my Suggestopedic methodology enabled many of my students to master the “generic conventions” of the “prose composition” to create competent pieces of writing based on their own lives.

I am convinced that Suggestopedia offers a powerful and educationally valid teaching method that takes cognitive processes into account. The following section reflects on the use of Suggestopedia from a neuropsychological perspective.

6.2 Neuropsychological Reflection

From the perspective of neuropsychology, Suggestopedia reminds teachers to be mindful of the ways in which the brain processes information. Lozanov’s insights appear to carry some neuropsychological weight. This section reflects on Suggestopedia’s connection with brain research.

Suggestopedia provides the brain with the massive and rich input upon which it thrives and in which it can find patterns. The Suggestopedic classroom is a “brain-friendly” environment enhanced by the state of “concentrative psychorelaxation” encouraged by the use of music. Information is carefully “packaged” by the teacher to facilitate maximal learning. Encoding into the brain is strengthened by the multi-path, both-sides-of-the-brain presentation. This teaching style is consistent with Sylwester’s (1998) comparison between the multi-processing abilities of the brain and a jazz quartet, each lobe of the cerebrum

contributing to the counterpoint. Suggestopedia's use of music is consistent with Weinberger's (1995) claim that the brain is specialised for musical tones and pitch.

The rich, multi-sensory input of Suggestopedia is consistent with Crick's (1994) claim that the functions of the brain are massively parallel. Lozanov's claim of a state of "concentrative psychorelaxation" may be consistent with Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) claim that a state of consciousness called "flow" is the major criterion for optimum learning.

In theory, multi-path processing leads to the development of new axonal and dendritic connections. Suggestopedia mimics the brain's proclivity for tangential, parallel, and associational rather than linear connections. In providing pictorial stimuli, Suggestopedia harnesses the brain's superior memory for pictures.

Teachers are not neuroscientists. Yet we supposedly specialise in the transmission of information and should thus have a rudimentary knowledge of brain function. I have not yet even begun reading in the field of modern neuropsychology, and I look forward to acquainting myself with the work of scientists such as Pinker (2005). Suggestopedia reminds me to keep my knowledge of the brain up-to-date.

In the final section of the chapter, I provide a more personal reflection on Suggestopedia.

6.3 Personal Reflection

Since my *Fantasiën* experience at Stellenbosch, Suggestopedia has become such an integral part of my practice that I probably take for granted certain behaviours like smiling and greeting students by name at the door, a brilliant Lozanovian touch that cannot be expressed by any lesson plan.

Lozanov has made me the teacher I am today. He reminds me to create an environment designed for optimum brain function. Perhaps the greatest gift he has given me is the realisation that the brain thrives on variety and that it soaks up stimulation multi-modally.

He reminds me to be playful and gentle and funny and yet retain a certain enigmatic “authority”. He reminds me to add joy to the experience of learning, to take pride in the presentation of my work (and appearance!), and to take care of the details.

As Gold (2002, 1) points out,

The essence of the Suggestopedic approach is the attention paid to detail, since it is the details – especially the invisible ones – that will shape the attitude of a student to the subject matter and fashion his or her self-image as a student. This, in turn, will result in greater or lesser confidence and receptivity. Let me give examples. If a teacher wears indistinguishable streams of uninspiring clothing day after day, the suggestion is one of routine and tedium; this numbs the senses and deprives visual learners of memory hooks on which to hang what they have learnt. Noticeable variations from a rich range of elegant clothes, on the other hand, suggest that the class is an important occasion and that students are worth looking decent for. This affords a festive air to the class and helps students better remember everything that transpires against an unforgettable backdrop of memorable colour.

In stressing the details, Lozanov was ahead of his time. Thirty years later, the mainstream has caught up with him with the publication of Gladwell’s (2000) *The Tipping Point* (subtitled “How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference”) which argues, for instance, that a major cause of the drop in crime statistics in New York City during the 1990s was simply a clean-up of the city’s subway system.

Like Suggestopedia, creative writing requires confidence, colour, and attention to detail. Suggestopedia’s use of colour, art, and imagination make it an ideal recipe for stimulating the creation of vivid student writing. I hope that the English teacher, if he does not buy the full meal, will find in the Lozanovian smorgasbord a dish to please the palate.

In scrolling through the student essays, I feel that my Suggestopedic intervention was successful. Much of the writing is spirited and passionate, and much is alive, gutsy, contemporary, and “proudly South African”. It is tempting to think that any improvement

might be due to any one isolated factor or another in the teaching environment, but Suggestopedia's triumph is that it tries to orchestrate all learning environment variables.

In this dissertation, I have set out to inform other teachers about Suggestopedia and provided an argument and data to persuade English teachers in particular to adapt its principles in their classrooms. I hope to have invited the reader to consider to what extent his own practice is "brain-friendly".

I have also suggested that Lozanov's principles enable teachers to see beyond the dry, "Outcomes-based" lists of portfolio requirements the joy, love, and laughter in our students. And I hope that the creative work reproduced here shows that our students do have valid stories to tell; all we have to do is encourage the confidence to tell them.

The future of the Suggestopedic path leads, in my view, to the computer screen. So-called "multimedia" computer programs synthesize voice, text, art, and music. The teacher, as the architect of knowledge, may, like the conductor of a symphony orchestra, click the mouse with a flourish to create a rich sensory virtual environment that maximizes learning. Davis (1988, 1) argues that all learning has a visual component, and that how a student visualises research...

...becomes key to realizing the potentials of the new technologies. By accessing libraries of images created from text, video, audio, and computer graphics, the student is confronted with "virtual universities"...The visual reference paradigm that this convergence of technologies represents will change expectations of mass media.... Who will control this process? ...What will the inevitable marriage of education and entertainment mean? ... The teacher of today has responsibilities on a planetary scale. Multimedia ...will allow a long gaze into our collective visual memories. What we see may astound us. The window can close, however... While the window is open, the teacher must be responsible for what is seen. There is one basic factor that separates the teacher from anyone else using these new... technologies...: love of subject. The message of this new ... environment is this: It is the time of the teacher.

Lozanov and other scholars who have explored the potential of his work have shown us how to provide optimal stimulation for the brain, and we now have the technological resources to create nearly whatever we wish in terms of "multimedia" computer learning

possibilities. A fusion of Suggestopedia's expert melange of multi-sensory input, music, games, and pictures with the infinite possibilities of multimedia would indeed, I believe, be enormously powerful and worthy of substantial research.

Suggestopedia is a comprehensive teaching methodology that manipulates the classroom experience in order to facilitate maximal learning. Its benefits have been demonstrated by a convincing number of studies. Yet few teachers have ever heard of it. Rather than its being adapted yet again by another commercial enterprise, I plead for university education departments to take ownership of Suggestopedia and recognise it as a legitimate and efficacious teaching methodology.

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APPENDIX A: Music List

(from Miele, 1982, p. 49)

A: Active Concert

B: Pseudopassive Concert

A) W A Mozart: Concerto for Violin & Orchestra No 5 in D Major.
Rondo for Violin in C-major

B) J S Bach: Fantasy in G-major for organ
Fantasy in C-minor
Trio in D-minor
Canonic Variations and Toccata

A) W A Mozart: Haffner Symphony
Prague Symphony
German Symphony

B) G Handel: Concerto for Organ & Orchestra in C-flat major, op. 7 no. 6
J S Bach: Choral Prelude in A major
Prelude & Fugue in G-minor

A) L V Beethoven: Concerto for Piano & Orchestra in E-flat Major No. 5 (Emperor)

B) A. Vivaldi: Five Concerti for Flute and Chamber Orchestra

A) L V Beethoven: Concerto for Violin & Orchestra in D-Major, Op. 61

B) A Corelli: Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No's 3, 8, 5, & 9.

A) P I Tchaikovsky: Concerto I in B-flat minor for Piano & Orchestra

B) G F Handel: The Water Music

A) J Brahms: Concerto for Violin & Orchestra in D-Major, Op. 77.

B) F Couprin: Le Parnesse et l'Astree,
Sonata in G-minor.
J P Rameu, Peces de Clavecin No's 1, 5.

A) P I Tchaikovsky: Concerto for Violin & Orchestra in D-major, p. 35

B) J S Bach: Chorales Dramatiques for Organ, BMW 680-689
Fugue in E-flat Major, BMV 552

A) W A Mozart: Concerto for Piano & Orchestra No 18 in B-flat Major
Concerto 23 in A-major for Piano & Orchestra

B) A Vivaldi: The Four Seasons

A) J. Haydn, Symphony No. 67 in F-major
Symphony 69 in B-major

B) A. Corelli, Concerti Grossi, Op. 4, 10, 11, 12

A) F. Chopin, Waltzes

B) G F Handel, Concerto Grosso Op. 3, No's 1

APPENDIX B: Examples of Suggestopedic Elements in Action

RIRA BIEN QUI RIRA LE DERNIER

Mercredi 1er Avril
 (Le jour du Poisson d'Avril)
DANS UN AUTOBUS
Alice a loué un car pour emmener tout le monde à une présentation de mode. Ils partent pour la Salle d'Exposition sur le Quai des Pêcheurs.

R.P.: Quelle ville!
 E.P.: Je suis amoureuse de San Francisco.
 L.W.: Les rues sinueuses et les hôtels particuliers de l'époque victorienne.
 H.W.: Leurs teintes pastel atténuées, en cadres de couleurs vives.

 R.P.: Et leurs intérieurs majestueux, meubles du mobilier ancien le plus raffiné.

HE WHO LAUGHS LAST LAUGHS BEST

Wednesday, April 1
 (April Fools' Day)
ON A BUS
Alice has chartered a bus to take everybody to a fashion show. They set out for the Exhibition Hall on Fisherman's Wharf.

R.P.: What a city!
 E.P.: I'm in love with San Francisco.
 L.W.: The winding roads and Victorian mansions
 H.W.: Their subdued pastel shades trimmed with bright colors.

 R.P.: And the stately interiors furnished with the most exclusive antique furniture.

Figure 18. Extract from Gold's French course (Gold, 2002)

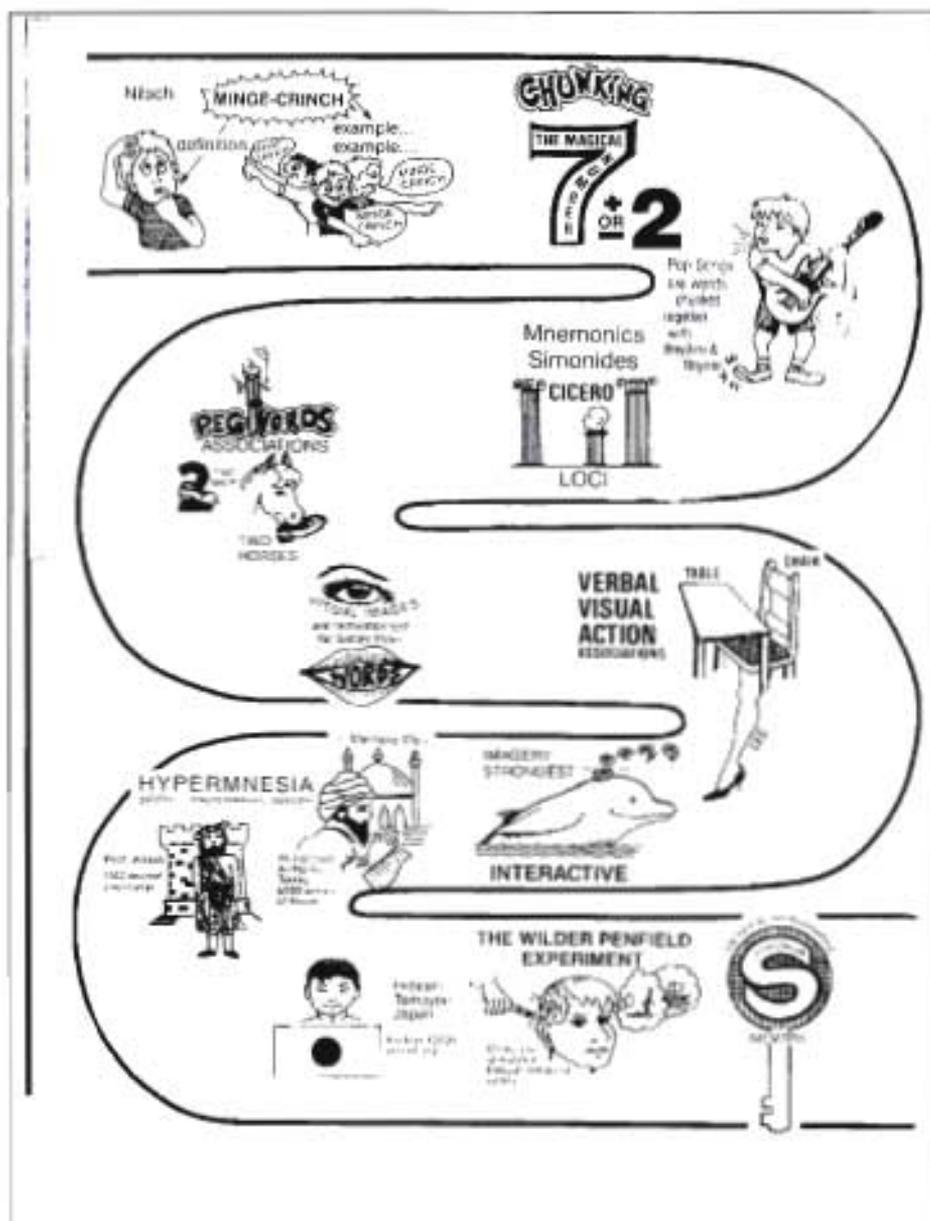


Figure 19. An Accelerated Learning "memory map". (Rose, 1985)

FIGURES OF SPEECH

<p>IRONY -expresses the opposite of what it means</p>	<p>SARCASM -expresses what it means in a sharp cutting way</p>
<p>RHETORICAL QUESTION -asked for effect, not for information</p>	<p>METONYMY -use of words related to something to describe it</p>
<p>SYNECDOCHE -a part of something is stated for the whole</p>	<p>TRANSFERRED EPITHET -quality transferred to related word</p>
<p>LITOTES -asserting something by negating its opposite</p>	<p>EUPHEMISM -use of mild language to avoid harsh term</p>
<p>HYPERBOLE -exaggeration for effect</p>	<p>MEIOSIS -understatement, sometimes for ironic effect</p>
<p>CLIMAX -building up of tension by arrangement of ideas</p>	<p>ANTI-CLIMAX (BATHOS) LET DOWN</p>

Figure 20. Figures of speech summary



Figure 21. Summary of Grade 12 poetry syllabus, 2005

APPENDIX C: Field Notes

Pre-Project

First drafts coming in. Some have potential & others r dumb.

Day 1

Poster project going well. Besides the expected “focus”, “detail” etc., other creations include “Zoom In”, “Challenge”, “By aiming for the impossible, we achieve the best possible”, “Beauty is in the inside”, “Unique”, “I am sexy”, “Be accurate and simple” “Brand Names”, “Smell”, “Taste”, “Imagery”, “Love”, “I am a Winner”, “If he can do it, so can I”, “Just Imagine”, “Work for it”, “Show, don’t tell”, “Believe in Yourself”, “Colour” “Passion”, “Live and Have Fun”, and my favourite: “There’s a million rand for everyone; you just have to use your mind to find it.”

I can see that most of them have really enjoyed this. Some of the posters don’t make sense, and some just don’t work well at all. But a number of students have risen to the challenge.

Day 9

The new desks arrive minutes before I am due to begin Concert 1. I manage to appear cool as desks go in and out. Please God don’t let them write on these desks! Well, if I can do this with 11E I can do it with anyone. N. asks me sweetly if she can finish her orange juice quickly. Stupidly, I nod, then witness an argument developing: someone else has snatched it from her. I flash my “Don’t give me this bull; this is high school” look. Eventually, we start. Concert 1 is Mozart 40. Some clowns are conducting along, but I ignore his and it stops soon enough. They seem to like the first essay. We have a reasonable chat about racial stereotyping.

Concert 2, as usual, puts them out like a bomb. After I finish the essays, no-one moves. Mozart has ‘em hypnotized! Some are literally sleeping.

Day 10

They’re late as usual. H--- arrives next- can u believe she already has a baby? She’s beaming. Then N--- arrives, greets me s courteously as ever, and takes out her book and pencil. S--- arrives and asks me earnestly how his marks are looking. Then some of the rowdier ones arrive belting out some song from Drama. D---swaggers in with a packet of cheese puffs and shouts something to P--- in the corner. He loiters to his desk and makes a big production number out of pulling the chair out. He glowers at me and asks me again what is in the exam. Edwin Swales Drive buzzes incessantly, an aeroplane overhead is lining up for landing, and a delegation of grade nines passes noisily in the corridor to the left. P---sneezes and G--- chortles. The lesson begins.

Day 12

Must use N’s “exam” essay as example of those that had too much detail.

Day 13

Am learning so much by typing out their essays. I’m noticing things I scanned over when I graded them. I see where I’ve been mean or over-generous in the grades.

Day 14

The essay exam was interrupted by a “bag search” for the picnic following the exam. No contraband was found.

APPENDIX D: Samples of students' writing

I: GRADE 9 STUDENTS

Essay 1

Essay final

The priest was not even finished saying “Usu gambamba uNkosikazi Wakho” (which means “You may kiss the bride”), and my brother-in-law had already climbed on top of my sister.

It kinda sounds all nice and all, but why would you want to get all dressed up for a couple of hours? One marriage can easily cost R20 000 in one day. “I wonder what happens after the wedding,” I thought to myself. My cousin tapped me on the back just as I had that thought. I jumped and said “What?”

She laughed and said “Gothcha!” But none of that now. The day was spectacular. The grown-up aunties and nannies that I barely even knew were at the infamous *Usu* in the big black Space Shuttle that they call a pot. You could smell it way down the dusty, stony street.

The radio was playing a big hit from the late Brenda Fassie: “Vulindlela”, and everyone was on the dance floor, including the old smelly man who was always in everybody’s business.

It was 10 o’clock, and I hadn’t even realised it. I went into the house, packed my pyjamas, and took my bag. I went to sleep at my friend’s house that has more bedrooms than I can count. I went there to take a schnooze because I couldn’t sleep in that noise at home!

Essay 2

Umlazi

As I got off the bus, I could see Mr Gumede the carpenter doing his woodwork. I could almost feel the atmosphere of Umlazi and the rhythm of the hooters of the taxis. On my left, I could see the toddlers being fetched from the Care-A-Lot Pre-School. I could tell from their faces that everything around them looked new.

Ahead of me was a narrow road called Kwadosi Road. I stopped at Mthunziwesizwe Store and bought a can of Vanilla Coke. Opposite the shop, Mrs Ndlovu was cleaning her windowsills; they looked shiny.

Khulusi Road led me to a path with sunflowers on either side. The path led me to Molokazi, which is not an attractive place, but I admire their lifestyle.

I walked up a steep hill. The road was full of smoke. Sometimes, they burn tyres to keep warm.

Closer to home, I saw the neighbours coming from work. I also saw an old man wearing torn trousers and a blanket.

The atmosphere of Umlazi is as strong as peppermint.

Essay 3

The Beach

It was a sunless hour; everyone was asleep. It was my first time awake so early in the morning. The only thing you could hear was the chickens from next door. The people who were alive and walking were me and my mother. She was wearing her silk nightdress with the yellow roses.

“Breakfast is ready,” she said. I could smell it: Jungle Oats with milk and banana. On the table was the lunch she’d made me: ten hot dogs!

My friend Mdu arrived. He is short, but he has a big head. He said that the taxi was waiting and that I was the only person missing from my swimming team.

I kissed my mother goodbye. Everyone was in the taxi. I sat next to Mawa. She was a good swimmer but not as good as me. The taxi started to move; it felt like ice was in the air. I was about to go to my watery home.

It felt like only ten seconds and we were there: the big blue sea.

My body felt stiff as I climbed out of the taxi. The captain made us run on the beach. The sand was like brown ice. The big waves crashed and splashed. I heard a million voices from the air: the big white birds had even bigger voices. The people around us had big voices too. Street vendors sold sweets and chips.

The captain told us to change into our swimming costumes. I was only 15, but I was swimming with the 18-year-olds. When I saw them, they all looked tall like my big brother. Some of them laughed at me.

My heart thumped as I stood at the Start. The starter told us no pulling people and please to turn by the red ball.

I ran into the broken ice of the sea. I could feel my insides starting to freeze, but I knew I could make it. One arm after the other, then breathe. The water was freezing.

I could see the turning point! Now I knew I could make it! As I turned, I could see quite a few swimmers ahead of me. All I could think about was getting out of this race alive. I passed someone! More power needed! I passed someone else!

Then I was out of the water. I began running: one foot after the other. I could hear girls’ voices: “Go Sanele!” They know I am fast on land. Girls are my weak point. I was so busy looking at them that I didn’t sense the athlete running behind me.

Essay 4

Home Sweet Home

“Home sweet home,” I tell myself as I get off the school bus. I walk on the dusty old road. There are kids all around me. I can smell the Chicken Dust.

I walk quickly towards home; my bag is heavy on my shoulder, and my stomach is calling for food. I enter Chakide Road, which is quiet as always except for the music coming from my house. I see my friends listening to their favourite kwaito music.

I enter my home, say hi to the family, and go to the fridge looking for food. I eat a bowl of my favourite food: samp. Then I wash my shirt and socks. What am I going to do next? Go out on my bike?

On my way out, I see a young man running with a DVD. He must have stolen it. Out of nowhere, a group of men catches him using whatever they can find as weapons. They hit him. He bleeds.

I don't blame them for hitting him; we are tired of criminals. Hitting them is the only way to get to the gangsters.

Essay 5

Last Soldier Standing

The burning orange-yellow fumes of the crust of the earth rust every soul growing old sold to the devil all gone even God couldn't save them. Crocodile tears run down my cheeks; how many fallen soldiers do we have? Pain from the real world strangles me as I stand up.

Many traps wait for me. Snakes wait to capture and torture me. Lord, please have mercy on me. Nurse me, and protect me from this poisonous world. The sins of the world have my buddies; rapped in alcohol.

This letter is to the youth. If the truth is told, the youth will grow.

It seems the world is leaning on my shoulder, and it is getting heavier each time I battle my way to victory. Finally, I am going to where the sun is shining. I am the last soldier standing.

Essay 6

Essay

It was a bright Saturday morning; the air was fresh and sweet. I had just finished my breakfast cereal when I heard a knock at the front door. I was 100% sure that it was my best friend Siyabonga, the tall dark boy from four blocks away who's only interested in playing stupid computer games. I knew it was him from the "police-like" way he knocked at the door. He was so tall that when I opened the door, I faced a gigantic shadow blocking me from the sun. He was wearing a blue T-shirt and jeans with black shoes.

"Are you ready?" he asked in his monstrous voice.

"Sure," I replied. We were planning to go to the movies because there was a 50% discount off the normal price. My mother was washing the dishes in the kitchen. She was still wearing her red pyjamas. I sat on the red kitchen chair to put on my Reebok takkies. Siyabonga waited for me outside like a zombie.

"Come on; we're going to be late," I told him. Outside, I could feel the heat of the sun on my skin. We started to walk on the hot pavement towards the Mall, a huge building in the middle of a green park.

As we walked through the glass doors, I felt the cool air. I took a deep breath of it. We took the silver escalators to the Cinema Level.

At the cinema, a beautiful sight took my breath away. Mariska was standing next to the cashier, in a red dress with green and blue flowers. It sparkled in the bright light. She turned around and walked towards us.

"Hello," she greeted. I was not able to utter a word. I was transfixed by her beauty. "What movie are you gonna watch?" she asked in her sweet voice.

I was quiet for a minute. She expected me to be the one to answer her, but I couldn't because I have a bad history with girls. Whenever I talk to her, I end up embarrassing myself.

"*Spiderman*," Siyabonga answered.

"Me too," she said. "You go on and get your tickets; I'll wait for you."

I could predict that I was going to have a bad day.

Essay 7

Late for School

The clock beeped. I slowly opened my eyes only to see that it was already seven o'clock. I was late; the school bell rang at 7.30! My whole day would be ruined; it takes me 40 minutes to get to school. I would never make it in time! I still felt exhausted from the dancing and eating at my sister's 21'st birthday the night before.

I cleared my eyes as I sprang out of bed. I looked at the time again; no, I was not dreaming. The clock was still beeping; I lifted my arm and pressed the button. My whole body felt weak. I put on my red slippers. They made my feet feel so snug and warm that I thought of going back to bed and telling my mother that I felt sick.

No, I thought. There is no time for thinking naughty thoughts now; I have to get ready quickly. I left my room and went down the stairs. The whole house was dark except for the kitchen that had transparent curtains. As I headed towards the shower, I noticed that the house was quiet. Too quiet for a house that has six people living in it.

As the youngest in the family, I was scared at the thought of being left alone. It was part of my mother's plan to leave me all alone, I thought. She was the only one who complained at me if I overslept. I walked to the bathroom door and opened it. Inside, the bright light of the morning sun hurt my eyes. I blinked a couple of times.

My stomach rumbled. Why should I go to school? Anyway, it was my mother and father's fault that I was late; they would understand. I decided to stay at home and watch television until everyone came home from work. I left the bathroom and walked through the dark passage that led to the doorless kitchen. I felt angry.

Suddenly, a spicy and tantalizing smell grabbed my nose. Someone was in the kitchen making a great meal! All my anger disappeared. I walked in to find my mother at the stove frying eggs. She was still in her pyjamas. Suddenly, I remembered: we'd had the party on Saturday night and it was now Sunday! I felt a cold chill; I had forced myself into believing that it was Monday morning!

Essay 8

Eng Essay

My heart raced as I gazed out the thick window of the van. The road was rocky, and the seats were hard as stone. We were going to visit my grandmother on a farm called Swaaiman in Pretoria.

We entered the mouth of the valley. The mountains towered above us. It was dark outside, and in the van too. My little brother was asleep on my Dad's lap. There were a few other men in the van with us; I could hear the two men next to me saying how late it was and that the van was slow. The man next to me had a deep voice, and his breath smelled of beer. Earlier on, he had asked me if I wanted a sip of beer, but my Dad had refused. The man had laughed and said that I'd be a man if I had some, but I knew he was just joking.

How uncomfortable the journey was! I gazed out the window; my breath made the glass steam up. All I could see was darkness and the trail of the van. We went over another bump. I heard bottles clanking below my seat. My Dad murmured something, but I couldn't hear him. I asked him what he'd said. He replied in Zulu that we were almost there. I felt excited. I hadn't been to the farm for three years.

The van took a left turn and suddenly stopped. I slid frantically on my seat, and my All-Star takkies squeaked on the floor.

The driver turned his tiny head. He was wearing a black hat with a few holes in it. "Everyone, pass your money to the front," he said. Everyone dug into their pockets, and the smell of money was in the air. I could see fifty rand notes being pulled out of wallets.

Essay 9

The Concrete Jungle

“Watch where you’re going, you fool!” a man shouted as he popped his head out the window of his grey and silver BMW 325i motor car, which had swerved and luckily missed knocking me by an inch. It happened so fast that I couldn’t even remember it happen; all I can remember was a screeching sound that pierced my ears like a pin into soft cheese and the crude remark he made as he drove off. My heart was racing from the incident: I’d been almost knocked over by a car, in a place that I barely knew, in the ‘concrete jungle’.

As I carried on walking, people were looking at me, some with a look of disgust as if to say ‘no manners at all’ and some with a look of relief as if saying ‘you lucky fish’. I carried on walking the pavement. I heard two women talking about me. The first one murmured something that I didn’t hear, and the second one replied: ‘These brats never look where they’re going!’ I did not like being called a brat, but I never made a remark back to an adult, so I carried on walking. I bought a can of Fanta, drank it in three sips, and threw the can in a bin.

I came to the corner. People were waiting for the green light. As I waited with them, I gazed around to view the skyscrapers around me. Finally, the little green man appeared, and instantly, as if switched on like toy robots, everyone marched across the street.

I scuttled across the road with the crowd. I passed West Street and Field Street. I was approaching my destination, like a solitary lion in the African plains approaching its prey. I passed a restaurant, and I could smell burgers and chips. My stomach rumbled. The lion is hungry now, I thought.

Eventually, I could see my destination, the place where I was supposed to be twenty minutes ago. I was late, but at least I hadn’t been killed by that car.

I entered the Wimpy restaurant. My eyes scanned the room for my parents as my nose took in the scent of chips. Yes, I thought, there they are: I could see my mother’s handbag and my sister’s large, rather furry, pink hat. I passed an old woman chewing chips like a camel. As I passed her, she raised her pale blue and grey eyes and smiled at me. I smiled back, but I still think she chews like a camel.

I reached my parents’ table. My four-year-old brother saw me first and screamed my name out. My mother smiled and then gave me her worried look. She asked: “Where were you? What took you so long?”

I smiled and replied: “Mommy, believe me, it’s a jungle out there.”

Essay 10

The Last Touch

I was shocked; I had no words. My thoughts were only of crying when my parents told me that, at the end of the year, they would be leaving. Would I be okay, I wondered. My eyes were wide open, but I could see nothing, just pure blackness and tears.

My brain said forget about your parents leaving, just enjoy your time with them. And that is what I did. My days with my parents went just perfectly, so well that I forgot about them leaving. There were no more tears, and there was no more darkness.

Until the day I finished Grade 7. I got home from school wearing my black shoes, long grey socks, and short grey pants. I had a huge smile on my face and my report in my hand.

Suddenly, my huge smile dropped. I knelt on the red carpet. My head faced them in sadness, and my heart broke into empty pieces. I turned to face my mother on my left. She was wearing a long black and white dress, and she was carrying a black case. My pain was no longer pain; it was something more than pain, more than hate. Mom and Dad didn't say goodbye; they were also in pain and tears.

All I had to remember was the last, warm, light touch on my head from the person I called "father".

Essay 11

My First Day in Morningside

I got out of the car and stepped onto the reddish tar. I was wearing my white Polo shirt and my blue Polo jeans. A red BMW M3 drove past, with silver mags and red-tinted windows. I said goodbye to my father and closed the door of the car.

It was hot. As I walked up Clarence Road, I saw a Shell garage on the corner. I saw a white woman wearing a short black shirt and a blue see-through top. I could actually see her breasts. She moved, and I ignored her.

I crossed the road and entered the Morningside Snack Shop. The sign had red writing and a yellow border. Inside the shop, I saw the three black machines with yellow buttons and a red gear. Above the screen, the sign said: 50c.

I took a ten-rand note from my pocket and went to the counter, which had a microwave oven in the middle and assorted sweets for sale. I asked the ugly Indian guy for change. He gave me a R5, two R2's, and two 50c coins.

I inserted one 50c coin in the middle machine...

Essay 12

Seven o'Clock Sharp

Get out of the van, offload the motorbike, and put on all my protective gear, my spine guard and helmet. I can hear music in the background and the noise of the bikes; I can smell petrol.

And then I am off. I hit the first corner. I see a huge speed bump coming up. I pick up speed and take the sharp corner. The gravel is loose, and the back wheel slides out of place; but I pull it back.

The trees whistle past me; they look like a flock of green budgies. I turn the corner, and here is the biggest bump in the park; it is 24 feet high. I hit it, and I know that I am not going to make it.

I hit the ground front wheel first and I ride it off, but the back slides out and I slide towards the wall. I jump off, but my back hits the bike!

Lucky I was wearing my spine guard. I get back on the bike and try it all over again.

Essay 13

Life in Chesterville

Chesterville is a small township near Westville. It is a small township, but it has a lot of violence. People know each other, and they stand up for each other.

One day, as I came home from school and as I hopped off the bus, I saw police on the street and a large crowd of people. I wanted to find out what was going on. The police cars were parked around an object. I really wanted to see, but I could not- there were too many people watching.

I asked one of my friends what was going on; he said he didn't know. I heard a voice on the police radio, but the police didn't pay it the slightest attention. I saw people looking at me and then whispering to each other so I could not hear what they were saying.

I went closer and saw a black plastic bag. From that moment, I knew a person was lying dead in that plastic bag, but who? The police arrived and took the dead body in a body bag.

The drama was over, so we went home and thought we would forget about it. But the police came looking for my friend's mother, and we showed them my friend's house. A few moments later, we heard my friend's mother screaming. We thought the police had done something to her, but no, she was the one fighting.

We ran and asked what was wrong. After she'd calmed down a bit, my friend's mother said, still crying: "My son has been killed! He was shot in a drive-by shootout!" I remembered this boy. We had not seen eye-to-eye. And then my body went cold, my eyes went dark, and after that I don't remember anything until I was at the police station.

Essay 14

The Big One

At our favourite fishing spot, we found that the water was dirty. It was raining, and we could not see anything. We pitched a makeshift gazebo and started preparing our tackle. I baited my hook and cast a good distance. The rain was clearing up, and with that the fresh smell of sardines came through.

Next to us, an elderly couple started a braai, and the smell of braaied chicken with beer poured on it engulfed my nose and sidetracked me for a while.

I left my rod down and relaxed for a while. I heard a ship's horn in the distance. The mountain was covered in fog.

Suddenly, my rod moved. First, I thought it was the wind, but there was no wind. Then my rod leaped into the water like a kangaroo. Luckily, I had a good grip. I waited and felt the line pull. I knew I had something on, but I did not know what it was. I spend my line switch and, as Durhan anglers would say, my reel screamed. All the line was vanishing and soon I would not have any line at all. My dad told me to close the switch and reel fast.

I closed it and started reeling and it was tough! My hand started cramping after a while. It finally approached the surface, and my Dad quickly ran down to the water's edge with a scoop net. I finally landed the fish of my dreams: it was a grunter weighing 8 kg's.

Essay 15

Strike!

It is a sunny day: the birds are free, and the smell of hot dogs from the nearby take-away is on the air. Traffic is forming in the city; it is 7 o'clock, and this is the wrong time to travel to work.

Nearby is the tranquil countryside. But soon, the people from this side of town will be striking as they feel their rights are being violated.

They enter the city like ants and fill the streets with noise and banners. They scream and shout and pull down trees and tear down signs; they vandalize shops and steal what's in them.

But in this crowd is a boy who has no proper clothing. He lives on the street. He is caught up in this action and does not know why the people he once thought were good have now resorted to violence.

The police arrive with guns and teargas. They throw the teargas into the crowd and start shooting. All hell breaks loose. People die, but the police do not stop shooting. The little boy is shot; he lies on the street and bleeds, but no-one stops to help him, not even the police. He is crying for help, but no-one hears his painful cries.

Essay 16

The Battle of the Blues

It's four minutes before finish time, and the Golden Rule applies. The players are tired as hell; all their strength has been wasted. Our goalkeeper Sifiso puts the football on the grass. Then he wipes his sweaty face with his T-shirt and moves six steps back as if he is going to kick the ball into the clouds.

He passes it to Sihle, the defender.

Sihle takes the ball, looks around, and moves forward to his opponent. He can feel the wind and smell the meat: Cornish chicken with beef spices being braaied. Ah, how delicious! He passes the ball to the midfielder, Spiwe. The ball rolls on the grass like a snake with black and white skin.

He does a skill and gets past the first player of the opposite team. He passes the ball to Stembiso, the right-hand winger.

As the ball gets to him, he stops it with his Nike six-bar soccer boot. He rubs the ball once and lifts his T-shirt to wipe the sweat off his face. As the player comes towards him, he pushes the ball forward and goes between the tired legs of the defender. As he runs, the crowd cheers: "Sthe! Sthe! Sthe!" He hears Siyabonga the striker shouting for the ball. Sthe jumps over the ball then touches it with his right boot, which shines like the sun. He runs to the corner of the field. He taps the ball with his boot. The defender comes in at full speed knowing that he will get the ball out of the danger area.

As he sprints towards the defender, Sthe lifts the ball. It goes over the defender's head, then Sthe runs round the defender to meet the ball. Out of the blue, another defender comes in with a sliding tackle; Sthe gently pushes the ball and shoots a curving, spinning cross into the box. The black and white spots on the ball spin into a pattern.

The striker Siyabonga jumps up and down impatiently waiting for the ball. Finally, he gets it, and chips it into the sky. Then he turns round, and with his red-and-white Adidas boot, he kicks the ball into the net: "Laduuuuuuuu-ma!"

The Mighty Lions fans go wild and blow trumpets and horns: "Boooo-Boooo-Boooo!" Some jump up and down shaking their bodies as though they have Mad Cow disease. They sing: "We are the mighty, mighty Lions!" Victory has overcome them; they are filled with joy.

Essay 17

Sunset

My best friend Storm and I were wandering around the Vaal Dam in the late afternoon. We hardly even noticed how late it was until we saw the sun start to set.

The sun caressed the sky with its multiple colours. The grass beneath our feet started to come alive with miniature diamonds of dew. The ever-changing colours of the sunset reflected in the diamonds.

A light breeze added a slight chill to the air. It carried the smell of a tasty charcoal braai nearby.

In the dam, three brown geese were silhouetted against the setting sun. They were doing a sacred dance only they understood.

The water changed from orange to red to blue to violet and finally a deep purple. Finally, the sun kissed the water goodbye

Essay 18

Awake

My alarm went off; another beautiful morning, I told myself. I struggled to open my eyes. I could hear the hens clucking outside.

I lifted my head from the blue pillow. I opened my eyes fully and saw the sun through the window.

I yawned so loud that the hen at the window ran away. I could feel a light breeze. The flowers in the garden were dark pink. I was about to switch the alarm off when it switched itself off. In the silence, I went back to sleep.

Essay 19

New Year in Umlazi

It's New Year's Eve, and everybody is planning what they are going to do to celebrate. Some of the gangs have planned "compromises" which means that every person contributes the same amount of money to buy liquor. Everybody gets all excited because they know they are going to drink themselves almost to death on the last day of the year.

The noise starts at about 8. Just about every house is braaing something or firing crackers. The air smells of meat and barbeque sauce.

The youngsters look for secret spots to drink, so they are less likely to be seen by their families. Boys drink one Amstel quart after another. Those with good jobs drink whisky or brandy. They smoke too. What I realise is that most people drink while they are sitting down, and they don't feel the alcohol until they stand up.

Later, drunk people are all over the roads shouting "Happy New Year!" You can smell the alcohol if they talk to you. You get to see different sides of people when they are drunk. Often, the ones who are normally quiet are talking, and the ones who are known for non-stop talking are quiet all of a sudden. Sometimes, when people are extremely drunk, they tend to say the wrong things to the wrong people to the wrong time; some may even die for opening their mouths. That's the disadvantage of drinking; the advantage is that you feel like you are living on another level of the earth.

As midnight comes, people are already too drunk to hold crackers when the countdown begins. Five minutes before the new year, people switch on radios. As the announcer says "Happy New Year", people go wild with their crackers, which go on till about 2 a.m.

When the sun comes out, the beginning of the end starts. People hire taxis to take them to the beach.

That's how we celebrate New Year in Umlazi.

Essay 20

Seven o'Clock Sharp

There I was one Saturday morning at seven o'clock sharp. I was floating on my board with Steven and Chad. The water was like ice and the wind was like knives. The cold ripped right through my spine. I shivered.

It felt as though time had stood dead still. The thought of a shark crossed my mind, and for a good period I was as alert as a navy marine. I realised that my body was a tense ball of muscle.

I could hear an old classic playing from a nearby fishing boat that was bobbing up and down like a cork. When I saw one of the guys on the boat catch a shad, I started to tease Chad.

I saw a huge wave starting to form. I paddled to reach it. It was eight feet high and moved like ice.

Essay 21

Sunset in Umlazi

I am outside my home. I have been sent by my granny to buy sliced brown bread. I walk on the pavement and turn left. I hear a scream from a young girl wearing a red dress. She wants to be carried by her mother who is all in white. The mother looks furious; maybe the child is becoming a pain. She expresses her fury by smacking the child's butt and saying "Keep quiet!" I have to hurry; it is almost night.

The shop is nearby now. Close to it, I pass a shack. I see two boys, about 15, smoking dagga. I buy the bread in the red shop.

On my way home, I see a taxi conductor wearing a blue T-shirt and green pants. He is persuading an old lady to get on the loud taxi, which is going to town. The lady tells him: "I don't take loud taxis!" The conductor persists; he even pulls her dress. She gets so angry that she hits the boy on his head with her black handbag. People laugh at him.

As I approach my house, I notice that the sun is setting. It is dark orange mixed with light yellow and milky pink.

Essay 22

Early Morning

I'm awakened by the prompt neighbourhood chicken. I get up, open the curtains, and just before I go to the bathroom, I'm blinded by the morning sun. As usual, I fill the bath first with warm water then with cold.

After bathing, I polish my old and wrinkled shoes. I get dressed and finish my maths homework. Then I switch on the kettle. The radio is playing my favourite song: "Breaking the Habit". I hear my bus and run to the door with my bag.

On the bus, I am once again blinded by the sun. Peter gets in and asks me what homework we had. I look at him and burst out laughing. He's wearing purple jogging takkies and a white beanie.

Essay 23

English Essay

Our car reversed slowly out the driveway. Before we left, we prayed. We were leaving our home of ten years: Umlazi. We were moving to Glenwood, in the suburbs. I was very excited. The car was full of our belongings. The Isuzu 4x4 climbed a steep road in first gear, and we passed a group of my friends. I waved goodbye and wanted to cry. But I told myself not to be silly.

The car stuttered along the busy road. I could see a group of beer-bellied men drinking at Sbu's Spaza Shop. There was loud music, and some were dancing to the beat. Children were playing a game of shumpu at the corner of Thembamabso and Love Corner Roads. My father hooted, and they scattered. The sun was shining brightly like a diamond. I was wearing jeans and my favourite red Bad Girl T-shirt.

My father was scheduling meetings on his cell while he was driving. My mother was writing a grocery list and planning our lunch. My brother was reading a magazine, and my sister was reading *Cry the Beloved Country*. One look at the cover of the novel made me think about what we were doing: we were leaving Umlazi, the second largest township in South Africa. The townships had developed because of Verwoerd's separation of races. Now, after the long walk to freedom, we were free to live wherever we pleased.

And now, we were going to live in the suburbs. I had never set foot in the suburbs before, but I had heard wonderful stories. My friends had told me about the huge gardens and enormous houses. I'd even heard that you can leave your front door open and no-one will steal your possessions.

As we arrived in Glenwood, I saw that everything was different. There was no Spaza Shop, Zulu-named roads, or kids playing on the corner. There were large houses with neatly-trimmed green gardens and perfectly pruned hedges. And it was so quiet, as though no-one lived there!

Suddenly, the car stopped. I looked out of the window. There it stood, with a lovely garden and a beautiful patio. My heart raced with excitement. It even smelled different to Umlazi; I could smell beef stew from next door.

The house was so big inside! I wandered around the rooms. It was beautiful, but I suddenly felt homesick for Umlazi. I missed the atmosphere and my friends. But I have grown to love my new home.

Essay 24

“The Government Does Not Care About Crime in South Africa”

I do not know much about the government, but I can tell you that they are not doing their work! Firstly, they re all in parliament discussing ideas that are not relevant, i.e. debating about the name *Amakrokokroko* for the paralympics team.

If the government was doing something useful about decreasing crime, then we South Africans would not worry so much about crime. All I know is that, if they really intended to fight crime, they would have built more prisons and increased the police force.

They only get huge amounts of money for their salary. They sometimes show them in parliament sleeping and not concentrating on the issues at hand! They should ban the government because they are wasting valuable time and money!

Essay 25

The Study Guide of my Way Home

It may not be far, but it is the most rocking place under the Durban sun, and it's where I live: Ntuzuma.

After school, I run to catch the bus. We pass a shopping centre, Sponono's Fat Cookies Store, Linda's Tavern and Shebeen, a marketplace, the train station and the taxi rank. We drive past KwaMashu, and I see Isivananda High School.

We drive past my uncle Dumisani's house, and soon we cross the intersection that leads to the one of the most feared, corrupt places in KwaMashu: Section L. We pass the shebeen owned by the Africa family and see men with huge bellies. If you are unlucky, especially on the weekend, you pass men fighting each other for the silliest of reasons, such as a cigarette.

At last we reach Ntuzuma, the place I was bread-and-battered in, where my life began.

The first thing I see is the bus depot. Next to it, Mama Ntuli is selling Snappers, Cheese Nax, Yoghurta's, oranges, and apples. In the distance, I can see the shacks of Lindelani, Inanda, and Nkabinde.

Beat by beat, the driver goes past Ntuzuma C and already I can see home. We drive past the Zabalaza Tuckshop, my grandparents' house, and the Msibambisame double-storey tavern.

I jump off the bus and walk towards my house. On the way, I meet Nosipho, S'bahe, Samke, and our local drunk Bongo.

At home, in the kitchen, I grab eight slices of white bread with plenty of cheese spread. Thank God I'm home!

Essay 26

Untitled

I wake up to see Umlazi. I push aside my floral pink duvet, take a bath, and get dressed in my parents' bedroom. As I step outside, I see that the sun is not yet up. That won't stop me from walking the streets of Umlazi. I take my mother's pink umbrella and ask her if I can take a walk. She tells me that it's okay but not to take too long.

As I step onto the veranda, I see two friends who invite me to walk to the shop with them. The street lights are on for no reason. A woman is sitting on a drum behind a table; she is selling sweets, chips, and biscuits. She is wearing a long torn brown skirt, a black jacket, and black sandals.

Close to the shops, we hear someone playing one of our favourite house songs. We dance on the street as though we're on a dance floor.

At the shops, we buy three packets of Lays, sour cream and onion flavour. On the way home, I take out a two-rand coin and buy three packets of Snappers and five sweets from the woman in the torn skirt.

Essay 27

The Day My Dad Came Back

The rooms of my gran's house smelt of fresh linen, and they were always warm and cosy. As you ran down the passage, you could smell cake being baked in the kitchen, and the smell would slowly drift by and tantalize your senses.

I'm six, and a very strange man I have never met before comes into the house. I stand dumbfounded and frozen. My mother, smelling of flowers and soil, comes in from the garden to introduce us. On this particular day, my gran was baking choc chip biscuits. I can remember how they smelt and tasted especially better because the house was bubbling with happiness and love.

I still said sweetly: "Mommy, I like him and don't want him to leave." Since then, I can still remember the warmth and love and the sweet tantalizing smells.

Essay 28

The Agony of Love!

Well now, let's see I've picked the topic "The agony of love!" because I guess I'm a hopeless romantic.

I believe there is such a thing as being in love because I know how it feels. Love is fun and exciting, but you also get pain, sorrow so in other words agony.

When I was about seven years old I knew a young woman who was madly in love with this young man but because of her love for him and because he said to her that there is no such thing as love and that it was just a cover-up of lust that this beautiful young woman cried herself to sleep each night because of the agony he had caused in her that she couldn't take it anymore so the day of Valentine' Day she went to his house and waited for him. When he came home, he found her body in his swimming pool and to this day he regrets what he said to her because now he knows that there is a thing called love and he suffers every night as he sleeps her spirit enters into his dreams and once again the agony of love disappears just for that time he sleeps.

So if you have read this paper, you should know that love can bring you happiness, joy, and excitement, but you must remember that with all of these things comes sorrow, jealousy, hate as well as love and if you summon all of those things into one neat little word it would have to be AGONY!

So just remember never be afraid to fall in love because if you don't love then you will never get to feel what it is to live and love and be loved.

This is my essay on "The Agony of Love!" and I hope you have enjoyed it. Remember with love comes pain, hate, jealousy, sorrow, and agony.

Essay 29

My Beautiful Childhood

The morning sun comes up into the clear blue sky. The rooster crows, and I hear my alarm clock on the table on my left near the window.

It's five o'clock in the morning, and I don't feel like waking up from my peaceful sleep. I snore away dreaming and drifting in a wonderland. My toes stick out under the red and blue blanket. My mouth is wide open, and saliva dribbles onto the white pillow. I sleep on my back. I have no worries about the new day.

The sun comes up and shines through my pen window onto my face. I yawn and pull up my blanket, trying to ignore all that was happening: the alarm clock, the rooster, and the sun.

A loud bang on the door gives me a fright, but it is just my mother waking me up. She takes me by the hand and drags me to the bathroom. She opens the tap for the hot water first and then cools it down. She takes off my pyjamas and makes me get into the bath. Afterwards, she wipes me with a bottle-green towel and drags me to my bedroom to get me dressed for school. I love my favourite underwear, but sometimes she forces me to wear other underwear just to get me finished.

I wear my avocado-brown school dress and the usual white socks and black Buccaneer shoes. I carry my green backpack and wear my favourite hairstyle (two beautifully combed ponytails) and my stunning green diamond earrings. I look dazzling in my school uniform, and each day I wake up feeling beautiful.

My mother or father drive me to school. When they drop me off, they say: "Nonto bye-bye", and I wave back and watch the car as it goes up the hill until the tall trees block my view. After school, they fetch me on time: 1.45 sharp, and the first thing they say is "Hello darling. How was your day?" and I say "Fine thanks". We drive away to the ice cream parlour where I order a chocolate chip ice cream with a cherry on top, and each day ends as miraculously as I want it to end.

Essay 31

The Agony of Love

As I was growing up towards my teenage years, I noticed that the world is nothing without love. Love is when a person has need, and care amongst every living soul. Love is a very good thing to us people but sometimes bad.

Love is good to us because in time of need people who love you are always there for you. When a person loves you shows their love in certain ways for instance when you have a problem in any way they are always there supporting you all the way.

Sometimes love is bad. I think we should be taught at a young age the definition of love because some people don't know what is love and that is a problem because, if you don't know the meaning of love, you end up all alone by just doing the wrong things to people around you and yourself in some cases.

Some people confuse love and sex. These are people who believe that love is sex which is wrong because in some cases the females who believe love is sex end up doing/making wrong decisions which affects them for the rest of their lives. Males sometimes take advantage of females because they know that some women believe that love is sex, so I think our parents must start teaching their children about love and sex.

Teaching your child about love and sex is sometimes hard because you feel afraid but it must be a must that children are taught about these things especially the males because some of them rape and does stuffs like kidnapping children just because they want to rape them and I find it wrong because sometimes kids find it difficult to talk to their parents because they are scared they might not understand.

Parents must understand children must be taught because love sometimes causes pain in the world. The world is absolutely nothing without love, without love we would be living in the world of hatred and hatred is pain, some people would be killing each other and there would be no such thing as family.

In order to love others you need to love yourself first; love is not a game and it does not cost anything but your heart you need to feel the love of others inside not just saying it.

2. GRADE 11 STUDENTS

Essay 32

Rage of Conflicts

I was awakened by two things his morning: the noise of the vibration of my cellphone and the sweet smell of my Gran's incense sticks filled with the rich smells of India. My Gran came into the room to see if I was up. Lucky enough I was almost ready since I had just come out of the bath and did my seven-oil bath and now it was time for me to get dressed and join the rest of the family. This year was different, though. My parents were not going to join in the festivities this year because they had converted to Christianity, and there I was torn between two worlds.

I sat in front of my dressing table adding the final touches to my make-up. My Sharara was a rich amber-orange colour with golden embroidery; my shawl also had a very unusual design. I put on my toe rings and my glass slippers. My Gran bent down and reached for my ankles. She had two beautiful ankle bracelets on my legs; they were gold with black beads and as I stood up to examine them, they jingled softly. I bent down to touch my Gran's toes, which is a sign of respect to receive her blessing. I stood up and kissed her. She reminded me that, before I came to the breakfast table, I should go and light the God Lamp and say my Diwali prayers.

I stepped out of my room. Everything from the passage to the staircase was beautifully decorated; every corner possible had incense sticks. As I approached the staircase, I saw that the stair rail was covered in saris and each step was lighted by two tiny lamps. By the time I reached the bottom, I marvelled at my Gran's creativity and love for this holiday.

I drew near to the lounge where the God Lamp waited for me to light it and pray. The lounge was filled with candles and banana leaves. The table in front of the God Lamp was for the sacrifices offered to the gods. I bent down to light the lamp and say my prayers. As I stood up, something fell out of my Shara top. I knew what it was. What was I going to do- put it back and pretend it didn't exist? Yes, it was my crucifix and yes, I was confused. My parents on the one side wanting to embrace their new choice of religion and here I was I and the rest of my family enjoying the religion I was born into and which taught me what to do.

I know that I am still under the authority of my parents and therefore I will just put my crucifix and pretend that it didn't exist for now. I didn't want this issue to upset the best day of the year.

And when the time comes I will deal with it.

For now, I'm going to enjoy the sweetmeats and other delicacies. I guess life has its reasons. But I pray I get to understand the true meaning of being satisfied with doing things that benefit me rather than others for a change. And there is a God out there who understands my heart.

Essay 33

My Dad

It was Thursday afternoon when I got the shocking news that my dad had passed away.

I was washing my shirt outside when my dad's brother came home crying. Then I knew that something had happened to my dad. Then I also started to cry and ran to my room and lay on my bed and took a pink pillow. Then I started to remember all the good times I had with my dad and I told myself that he is in heaven with the angels looking down on me and I know that he loved me the way that I love him and I know that someday we will unite in heaven then I can tell him how much he means the world to me and know that no-one will ever take his place in my heart.

Sometimes, when I'm alone, I pray to God that my father is okay in heaven and that he doesn't forget he has a daughter who loves him more than anything in this world and I would cry when I would look at his picture; it reminded me of the good times we had when I was a kid he would give me all the love that I needed and he wanted what was best for me and I would remember him saying to me that one day you would see me on T.V. doing what I love the most and that is acting then he would smile. I still remember his lovely smile.

I will always remember my father the way he was, and I hope that God is taking care of him because he's one of the people that I really care about, and I hope that some day me and my dad will meet again and that will be the happiest day of my life.

Essay 34

My Interesting Days in Eastern Cape

I got in Eastern Cape early in the morning. It was raining a little and cold; I could even smell the wet sand. The chickens were clucking like musicians.

Everyone in the house was very happy because I had come to visit. We sat at the fireplace while Auntie cooked us porridge. After breakfast, my sisters mopped and polished the house until it was shiny clean. I went out with my cousins to take out the cows and goats from the kraal to the grazing fields; you could see the cows' stomachs moving around while they were digesting their food. After they had finished eating, we took them to the river.

There are no toilets there; you had to defecate in the fields or garden so fertilization can happen and the plants will grow. And you had to go to the river to bath and I hated that because you had no privacy; anyone could look at you. But we did a lot of things to entertain ourselves in the absence of DVD players and satellite dishes.

We went fishing, and I remember I once caught a huge fish with beautiful silver scales like it was wearing jewellery. It stared at me with its big round eyes like it wanted to say it was going to avenge itself.

And in the morning my sisters went to the dam to fetch some water with their 25-litre buckets, so I went along with them. It was like Eden: I saw beautiful ladies; they were so beautiful you would swear they were from your dreams and that such beauty does not exist on Earth, but it was all real. I was so shocked that I could not even approach one of them. Though these girls knew me, it seems my sisters had been talking a lot about me. So these ladies approached me and we got to know one another.

The best times in Eastern Cape were on Sundays when we had a big family dinner. My Aunt will cook *sigwanqana*, which is beans with maize meal mixed together. And we drink *umqombothi*. And my cousin plays effluence music. And those were the days to be remembered and cherished.

Essay 35

Untitled

Gone are the days when I was awakened by my gran's church music playing at full blast at six in the morning. Gone are the days when I woke up with a smile on my face every morning and a gut feeling that my day would be great.

Gone are the days when I woke up every day in my hometown: Daveyton, a little town east of Johannesburg. From the crossroads, you can't help but notice the collage of cultures and personalities in this little town. I stayed in extension 2, the first section of Daveyton from the freeway. Close to the crossroads, suburban houses and old women in faded dresses with blankets round their waists sitting on orange plastic crates selling apples and potatoes to passers-by.

Past the crossroads and you can smell flame-grilled meat and chicken dust. A man passes wearing tight bell-bottomed bleached Levis, sneakers with bongo dreads, pierced nose, tongue, lips, ears, and eyebrows and with a punk chain attached to the jeans.

The pantsulas walk up the road speaking at the top of their voices in their tsotsi-taal. They wear orange All Star sneakers and brightly coloured pants and shirts.

The rappers on the corner near the bar are in over-sized shirts and label caps, sweatbands, and sneakers. They're busting rhymes and freestyling in their American accents.

All of these are collaborating in one little town, my home town: Daveyton.

Essay 36

My Father

His room was small, but the welcome was great. As I entered, there was suddenly a huge hot cloud of smoke. It hit my face gently and made me love the sound of many men talking at once.

The carpet was grey. As I stared at it, it was like the smoke was coming out of it. On the wall was a big red, green, and yellow picture of a lion holding a flag. Next to that was a Bob Marley poster with smoke coming out of his mouth. Behind the door was a big poster of Mike Tyson wearing his fighting clothes and red gloves on his hands.

Though sometimes I didn't understand why they were always happy when they were smoking, this gave me a very good advantage when I wanted money. On the blue headboard was a shiny silver Rambo knife and next to it I saw the coins my father gave to me when I asked for money.

He looked at me with his hazel eyes and lifted one big black eyebrow. His eyes glittered, and he smiled with dimples. Though he was what he was, no son could love a father more greatly than me.

Essay 38

Untitled

The sun is out, and everything is bright. The daisies are golden yellow, the trees are bottle-green and so is the grass. It's been a day after a couple of rainy days; everything is so bright and beautiful on this Saturday morning.

Everyone is happy. The women sit in groups peeling potatoes and pumpkins, chopping onions and tomatoes, and grating cabbages and carrots. They are not only working with their hands but their mouths as well, trying to share every bit of gossip about the community. The smiles on their faces show great joy.

The men in the back yard are slaughtering a cow and cleaning the meat. They divide the meat according to the custom. It's essential that man's meat is not mixed with women's. The females are not allowed to eat the cow's head. Every man has a knife in his hand, and the job is done quickly.

In the bedroom, the girls are singing and dancing preparing for the big performance. Most importantly, they are trying to calm Baphiwe the birthday girl.

At eleven o'clock on the dot, we are all dressed in our traditional outfits: black cow-skinned skirt, Zulu beaded hat, and white net vests.

Baphiwe wears a cow skin over her bare top half and beads across her round breasts.

We sing and head to the fields. The crowd follows us all the way down and form a semi-circle in front of us. They are cheering and singing. Baphiwe has a spear in her hand; she pokes it at someone, and he or she has to take it back to her accompanied by cash notes which are pinned to her hat with a safety pin. This process continues for quite a while. After an hour, she has a great deal of cash on her. We now have to head back home, change, and eat.

The curry and rice and dumplings are delicious. As we sit back, the sun starts to set, but the fun hasn't ended; the after-party has just begun.

Essay 39

A Day in the Township

I get off the school bus and wait for it to disappear around the corner. I turn around and walk towards my section. A tuck shop is on the left-hand side. I go there every day to greet my homeboy Msa who is the shop-owner.

I leave the tuck shop and walk to the far corner where my friends hang out. When you drive past the corner, you see my homies playing card games or gambling under the huge tree. Many older people are scared to go past the corner because they are afraid of the boys who hang out there; they say they are criminals and thugs. I know they are my friends and that they won't do a thing to me. As I pass them, I know that someone from the group will ask me for money to buy a cigarette. I buy them a couple and then go uphill to my neighbourhood.

I pass the disabled man who was shot three times. I see the guy who's always high from Monday to Friday. He sits at the same spot drinking and smoking. As I pass him, he mocks me; he teases me and says "Hello, Nelson Mandela's son." He calls me this because he says at home we are rich because I go to a Model C school where they charge thousands of rands for school fees.

I ignore the guy and carry on walking. I pass Madala's shack; he sells ordinary beers and traditional Zulu beer. I greet him because I respect him; he used to baby-sit me when I was a little boy.

I get home and change and do what every schoolboy does: finish my homework and wash my shirt and dream of what will happen tomorrow.

Essay 40

My Beautiful Farm

You find many interesting things on my farm. We also have animals such as cows, goats, sheep, ducks and chickens.

I first want to talk about my house on the farm. The houses are huts and normal houses. The huts are painted colourfully. The paint makes you focus on the hut. My mother's huts there is Zulu furniture inside which is decorated by animal's skins and made by wood in traditional way. There is a big yard.

When we get up in the morning, we have to go to the cows and take out milk for tea in the morning and then we go to the river, which is full of golden rocks which interests you to go near. These rocks are in the river. Around the river, there are trees and flowers. There are violets, roses, and sunshine. The river is very colourful.

We use 20-liter buckets to carry the water; boys usually put them in the barrow, and girls place the towels on their heads and put the bucket on top of the towels on their heads.

Because we used to visit during summer in December, so we go and plant certain crops, beans, mealies, potatoes and tomatoes as well as guavas...

In summer times we usually go and swim in the rivers. There are different rivers. The one to fetch water which I talked about earlier and the swimming one. I really wish that I can be alive for a long time so that I'll continue visiting my farm.

Essay 4 |

How “Love” Changes the World Around You

I have always looked at the world and told myself that it won't ever be what it was meant to be. This is because, from a young age, I have always looked for things that, no matter what happens, stay the same and make people happy. It was in 1997 that I thought I had found what would make anybody happy. That year, my family had just moved from Umlazi to Marianhill. I think it was the new life and friends that made me very happy at that time.

The first morning I woke up in Marianhill, I walked outside the house. It was 7.30, and all I could hear was the birds, the breeze, and the cars. A leaf twirled down and fell at my feet. I picked it up and held it between my fingers. Then I saw a leaf torn off a tree by a passing bird. I suddenly realised that I was focusing more on making new friends and never noticed the seasons. The seasons were different here in Marianhill, and the sun burned in the unforgiving sky.

I never really had time to look at the leaf in my hand because there was so much to see in Marianhill. When I was not busy, I just looked at the sky, which reminded me of Umlazi because I used to watch the sky a lot when I was a kid. When I think about it all now, it reminds me of the nights I used to look out the window in my room and watch the sky. That's when I used to think about what it is that could change my world and make me happy all the time.

That was seven years ago, and now I look at things from a different perspective. Since I've been in high school and living in Marianhill, I've realised that something is missing in my life. During the English lesson at school, I realised what it was. We were doing poetry:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

I told myself surely there is someone out there who would make me feel like this.

On the bus home from school, I saw a very beautiful girl, and the way she looked at me made me feel attracted to her. Not that I have never felt this way before, but I could see that she felt the same way about me. I knew then that I had to do something about her, so I quickly took a pen and paper and wrote my name and cell phone number on it. When it was time for me to jump off the bus, I just gave her the paper. I could see she was really impressed because she thought I was just going to jump out the bus without a word, but I did something more than just going to her and saying Hi.

Later on that day, she called, and for a few minutes we just got to know each other. Then I told her how I felt about her, and she told me she felt the same, so from the first time I saw her, she was my girl. This really changed the way I am because, from that day, I started to think positively about everything. I know I can do anything only if I make an effort. Love has changed the world around me because, from that day, I have been able to do things I never thought I would.

Essay 42

He's Gone

We'd lie on the big, black three-seater couch at the far end of the room watching comedy movies. He'd chase me around the huge tree that was about to die. When he eventually caught me, he'd grab my cheek and pinch it until it went red.

My dad is an angel sent to protect me, and I felt good having him around. There as nothing I was short of; my life was whole. All the jokes and fun were here a minute ago. Now, I find myself looking for him, but he's gone. It's hard to start a new life. It feels as though if I make the puzzle there would be pieces missing.

So I start with hiding that empty space deep inside my shaken heart but it oozes out little bits at a time. I walk around in a lost world where people don't seem to talk my language.

I'm reminded of his presence when I stick my nose up in the air and ironically get that fruity Aramis smell that followed him wherever he went. I turn around and hope I will maybe see him standing behind me, but he's gone. Am I going crazy or can't I let go?

It's time to sleep, but I can't. I hear the hustle of the angry wind? Raindrops blow in the window sprinkling wet on my face as I try to fall asleep. My head is filled with thoughts I can't control. As soon as I close my eyes, I see his face fresh in my mind, so I open them immediately and step back to reality. I wait for his gentle footsteps to enter my room and his smell will soon follow. I sit up and stare at the door, but all I can see is the big poster of Beckham.

Come on dad, turn out my lights and press a kiss on my forehead. I shouldn't have opened my eyes because he'd still be there in my thoughts, but I did open them...and the truth is: he's gone!

Essay 43

Picture No. 2

Living all my life with my mother who was mentally ill, making every day seem to be like any other normal day although it really isn't. My mother was a nurse at the ICU ward at King Edward Hospital. She was constantly learning at a part-time medical school to become a medical practitioner or doctor. She was the only child in her parents' generation and used every opportunity to become what she had always wanted to become.

My grandparents were very poor and lived on the farm. My grandmother sewed curtains to make their survival money and to educate my mother. As my mother passed her matric with excellent grades and entered the nursing home at King Edward Hospital, her parents both died in a bus accident in Port Shepstone. This hampered my mother's progress at the nursing college, but she got over it and passed her nursing course.

She became a nurse in 1982 and had me born three years later to a man who couldn't care less about me and her since he was already married to another woman. My mother bought our home and furnished it exceptionally well without any help from my father. She taught me everything I know about household chores and medical care.

In 1997, my mother passed her Doctorate degree and was already appointed as Head Matron of the ICU ward. Everything was coming all right for a change, and there came a time when I forgot I had a father. My father started having problems at his house which led to his divorce with his wife.

In late 1998, my father started coming to my home more and more frequently as my mother was now a professional doctor and we were living an elegant life. The nurses who worked with my mother grew very jealous of her, and one of them even went to a witchdoctor and made my mother mentally ill. She had to stop working and later on received her sickness retirement.

My father thought he would do as he pleased in our home seeing that my mother was now ill and couldn't carry out her normal housekeeping chores. My father started pressurizing my mother to sign a new will that would include him as well. My mother agreed but did not do as he had said. My mother died a few months later, and all my father wanted was to meet my mother's lawyer.

The time did come for me and my father to meet the lawyer. He told us that all my mother owned would belong to me, and nothing would be given to my father, and since he wasn't married to her, he couldn't do a thing about that.

My father sat for long hours in my late mother's lawyer's office with this worried face as if he was deprived of his rightful inheritance as you can clearly see in the second picture.

Essay 44

My First Kiss

I stood at my bedroom window for a clear view of the lifeless, brown, and leafless trees. The wind touched my skin with an exotic kiss. I moved my hand to hold onto the frame of the window. The cool air on my skin made me feel sensual.

Just then, a pair of warm hands touched my cool shoulders. "Feeling cold?" a voice asked, sounding concerned.

"Yeah," was all I could say, but I could feel my body heating up from head to toe, making the wind seem powerless.

I turned around and was greeted by a warm smile showing off perfect white teeth and deep dimples on both cheeks. I saw hazel eyes; full, round lips; and chocolate brown skin that seemed to glow with excitement as our hands met.

I took a Tempo chocolate from the desk and walked to the window. I sat on the sill and broke the chocolate in half and took a small bite. The wind grew stronger and blew up my dress showing my bare skin. I could feel the tension in the bright blue room with scattered books and clothes on the fluffy white carpet.

I stood up, and we stood close to each other with our hands touching; it seemed like a long time before our bodies touched. I gazed directly into deep eyes. The heat of my body was unbearable; an electric current seemed to draw us together. I couldn't talk or even move my lips. My body was static and motionless when suddenly, after a long time of desire, our lips met. The lips I touched were warm and wet; this was what we both wanted.

Just then, a vision of red and purple roses scattered round my bed and my husband-to-be carrying me to bed brought shivers to my body. I realised that the buttons of my dress were being slowly and rhythmically unbuttoned. My favourite song, "Make It Last", was playing in the background.

This vision was then slashed by the thought of my boyfriend, which made me feel the gravity and come back to reality. I pushed myself away, and tiny tears streamed down my face. I looked up feeling shamed and disgusted. I haven't kissed my boyfriend of two weeks, but here I was kissing my best friend! She also came back to reality and realised what had just happened.

I looked at her. "I was kissing a girl!" I thought to myself. This is not how I planned my first kiss to be, but this is how it was.

Essay 45

VR6

2 Fast 2 Furious, gravel heat burn them thighs black G-funk on. Damn! She's furious ready to start the ignition. In common grounds there she stars her night fusion.

In the night vision, I explore sensation drag racing with my brother. He was driving a black cat "kadet". It was at Jacobs near Engen garage where the race started.

I was sitting next to my brother's driver's seat looking through the window, which was an intriguing sight because you could tell another whole story of thongs and G-strings; the whole fascination of a man's dream. It was a rainbow nation of green, yellow, dirty silk, hardcore leather fashion (Panther jeans, mini skirts)- the work of incredible dependency of revealing bootylicious, gorgeous babes, fast, furious, ready for passion, and ready to be geared and increase the level of dependency.

For the moment, I was blown by the whole episode and drama. There was one mean monster, black beast with nitrogen hydraulics, Nos, silver nitron night vision, Viz Turbo drive, 15-inch spider rims with a tattoo of a pitbull stating "Live your life a ¼ a mile."

Now this was a thing of beauty. A true babe that never kets you down but that steals your heart, shows you the world, and rides you like hell and lets you be comfortable in its hardcore leather insult.

Well I was disappointed because she didn't race, I wanted to feel her Nos, hydraulics pumping up my chest with full desire, dominating its battleground.

Essay 46

From Cape to Zululand

I was born there, raised, where I went to school from Grade 1 to 9, and that is Eastern Cape. It was a rural school with blacks only. The kind of school that has 14 rooms, and children don't go from classroom to classroom but teachers from the staffroom come to us. When not at school then you are at home because going to clubs was not a fashionable thing but shebeens is where everyone goes. When someone/you are at home, you wear anything from scrappy tops or casual wear to your dirty self playing on playground and dusty.

There is a grandmother coming from collecting a pension/old age grant wearing a blanket with a walking stick and a pink apron. We have the chickens and cocks and cows and sheep and goats. There is nobody laughing at someone's mistakes, and the view is just wonderful because of the green mountain and a little waterfall to the river.

But I have another house in Durban bought in 1989. I had to come do my high school here and got used to the city life, but I was not completely new to this home, people laughing at anything you do which is just dumb because no-one knows everything. The swearing of people in the streets, a person screaming because someone took her bag. Traffic and many people going up and down. There is just no peace and quiet, everything is just too much. But it's nothing I can't handle. I'm just not used.

Essay 47

Untitled

Lamontville: home of the gunshots at night. I'm still alive. I wake from my white-squared bed. I wipe out the yellow stuff in my eyes. My mom screams to me to go and buy brown bread. I put on my blue-and-white Adidas, my black pants, and my white T-shirt. I open the brown door. Outside, it's a sunny day. I hear Nelly's song "Is You" playing somewhere. I see the wack M.Cees talking about their fake bronze chains and fake Rocawear blue T-shirts, State Property jeans and Loxion Culture shoes. I get mad. Further on, I hear rappers doing "Step Into the Free World"; I smile because they're down-to-earth and rapping about real issues.

I go down Dark Street. I see big patches of green grass that has not been cut for the past year. I'm forced to walk in the green and brown bush with sticks and twigs. I don't like it, but it is the only way to buy bread. I see a woman in a red dress fighting over her bag with a thug. No one helps her out. A neighbour calls the police.

I buy the bread at the green shop in Indian Town Street.

There's a lot of work to be done here. There's a small change like destroying shacks and bushes and making small, brown matchbox houses, free from the government. But it also leads to crime because they are put in the wrong location. I love the musical movement here, people start rapping and writing good music and taking out stupid Mcee's and rappers.

It's a blessing to have one of the most brilliant rappers around here: "The CEO of General Army Records", General. He's good in rapping, singing, thinking, and producing, and teaches and helps people. General ARMY forever! This is good because it's an inspiration for people to stop crime and do something good.

Essay 48

Traditional Wedding

Everyone chatters about the bride and groom. As I enter the room, I see yellow, green and blue flowers. The bride is wearing a white dress with beads on it, and beads in a line from her hair to her forehead. She looks beautiful as she takes the dish waiting for the groom to serve her. On the table are chicken, inyama yengulube, steak, sauce, salad, iphapha, rice, and dessert. The meaty smell is delicious. I don't feel like eating because I am too excited.

The bride is beautiful, but I can see she is exhausted. I can't imagine how she must feel, knowing that she is now a married woman. They dance their first dance as a married couple. The song is "Kisses in the Moonlight". They look as though they can't wait. Everyone cheers; the place seems to come alive.

We leave and drive to the groom's home. The bride sings a traditional Zulu song and dances as she gets out of the car. Friends, neighbours, and family follow her as she goes towards the house.

I can smell a slaughtered cow. The day has not ended. The party will continue through the night.

Essay 49

Nigerians in my Hometown, South Beach

Where seagulls fly gracefully in the sky, where the waves crash and sexy models take their one and two steps like models showing their thighs, we hear loud music thundering from the taxis. We have a variety of beautiful buildings and then it's with the style Durbanites call "Amakwerekwere", who are Nigerians which people hate.

A Nigerian crosses the street with his stylish trend of Levis, Adidas, Nike, and Diesel, and carrying his Nokia or Samsung cell phone and wearing fancy chains, rings, or necklace.

The instant reaction of Zulu men is that the Nigerian wants to charm their women with his wealth. This is a ridiculous opinion about Nigerians since they too have the skills, just like everyone else, to propose to a girl "snela" in a manly way. Another thing is that these guys have the respect and dignity which we Zulu men don't have for our women; they don't act bossy or try to overpower women like us Zulu men. I heard a woman say: "Whoo! My Jerry treats me better than that uptight, abusive ex- of mine." It really makes me feel ashamed of being a Zulu man, the fact that Zulu men treat their women like dirt.

We all know that behind the litter and glamour is hard work. I know how these dudes make ends meet. People say that Nigerians sell drugs the size of Disprin tablets. Half tablet is R25, the full one is R50 from what I've heard. These foreigners are masterminds in business; some own saloons, bars, cellphone stores and clothing shops. Some of these foreigners with far more cash do both legal and illegal deals, which is why the police are always on their trail, watching every wrong move they make.

I wonder how a foreigner who is a fugitive with no money is able to survive in such an expensive neighbourhood. Vincent, one of my Nigerian friends, owns a magnificent silver 325i BMW with cutting-edge audio, a flat, and two businesses: a cellphone shop and a bar. He tells me: "You have to strive for success by working your way to the top; you have to grab every opportunity that comes your way."

People should try to understand these people and should know that whatever they do, wrong or right, is human. No-one is perfect; we are all God's creation.

Essay 50

Christmas in Empangeni

On the morning of Christmas Day, I got up wearing my shorts. As I opened the blue curtains, the sun shone on my face and I saw the chickens running in the yard. I looked down to the vegetable garden; there was my mother with a huge basket on her head. It was filled with vegetables: mielies, cabbage, batata, and dumbes. I am still amazed at how my mother can balance a basket full of vegetables on her head. I watched her as she came up the steps, the basket still balanced perfectly as if she had put some sort of sticky tape on it.

We were at Empangeni where my granny lives; she was the one who called me and my brother later on. She was wearing her yellow dress. She really does not like to call us because she says we are the men in the family and should be the first ones up helping with everything around the house.

My brother and I were getting dressed. I was wearing my shorts. Everyone was already seated at the table; this was surprising because my sisters are usually the ones who come late. Everything was ready at the table; I could smell the meat of the cow that had been slaughtered early in the morning. We also had some pork and lamb. There was also puthu, beans, mielies, and stiff pap. My sisters and I found it hard to peel the batata, so we gave it to granny to peel for us, and she would do it in a few seconds. Her fingers moved so quickly around that batata.

To drink, we had Zulu beer, umqombothi, which my granny had made with yeast, lots of sugar, baking powder, and lemon. To drink the beer, we had to put one hand at the bottom of the pot and one on the side. And when you receive or pass on the beer, you have to do so with both hands on the pot.

Then we went outside to play some games, like shumpu, which is played with a ball made of newspaper.

I don't think I will be able to spend Christmas anywhere else except at Empangeni because it is different to the cities. At Empangeni, everyone is free and friendly.

Essay 51

The Sangoma

I was told that I would be leaving. I had been at home for three days. My father had left for work, and my mother was ready to leave to go with me to see a Sangoma because I was sick.

We were going to Kwa Cele, the famous Sangoma. I was scared because I had never been to a Sangoma before. I stood outside his door and was asked to remove my shoes. I felt hot even though the weather was cool. My whole body felt numb; it felt like I was going to Death Row.

The Assistant asked us to come inside and told us that “Amakhosi” are waiting for us. As I walked inside the room, the first thing I saw was the skin of a big snake. As I moved forward slowly, I heard a person chanting although I couldn’t see him. The room was dark and full of smoke. I stood still and coughed. I saw a lot of bottles all over the room; I assumed they must be medicine.

I looked up to see an ugly monkey. It didn’t move, so I assumed it must be Death. I took a breath and tried to relax. He called me and said “Mfuna come closer”. His voice was rough like he was talking from a distance. We sat down on the floor. He was looking down; I couldn’t see his face because the braids in his hair were blocking it. He was carrying a stick with feathers in his right hand: iSheba leZangoma.

He looked me in the eye, but it felt like he was hiding something from me. He said: “You have a problem, Mfuna and the ancestors are not happy. You are sick, and something should be done, and this is done by another man who hates you and your family.”

I pretended not to hear. Every time he spoke, my mom and I were supposed to respond after him. He would say “Vumani bo!”, and we would say “Siyavuma”.

He stopped talking and looked at me with his small red eyes. He started pointing at me with “ishoba”. He asked me to blow into a bag made out of the skin of a goat. In the bag were bones and seashells. He told me everything, and I was shocked to hear how many people hate me.

We left Kwa Cele, and he had given me all the healing medicines and told me all the instructions how to use them. There is something I learnt that day, that when you are leaving the Sangoma’s house you must not say “thank you” because the muthi will not work at all if you do.

Essay 52

Untitled

I travelled two hours to get to Maphumulo our farmland where we went to visit during the December holidays.

We took a taxi. It could carry up to 16 passengers, but it had only ten, and the space that was left accommodated our luggage. The first hour of the journey was long but exciting because my mind was focused on what I was going to see. We took the freeway of Inanda N2. The road was very straight, and the cars were going very fast- you couldn't see the driver. Most of the cars had a trailer being pulled; you could swear they were going on camp or vacation. We didn't have a trailer because our luggage was inside the taxi.

On the side of the road, I saw tall pine trees swaying slightly in the breeze. Further on, I saw a lady balancing a bucket on her head. She was dark in complexion, and drops of sweat were running down her face. Her dress was old and patched. In her left hand, she held the hand of a child who had no shoes. They must have walked a long way because I did not see a shop or a river nearby until we reached the dusty roads of Hlabisa. We had to stop and wait for the cows to pass, being hit with a cane running across, pushing each other.

We had to stop again because of the woman standing in the middle of the road. She did not see us coming; as the driver hooted, she jumped up, confused about which side to run to. She lifted her hand apologetically.

The journey continued. We passed small huts with smoke twirling out of the chimneys. A crowd of children were racing their homemade wire cars. They waved at us and we waved back and they chased our taxi from behind.

Further on, an old and rusty sign read "Welcome to Maphumulo". We were close enough. I was tired of sitting; my takkies started to feel hot. We arrived at the house; I could see women sweeping the floor and singing as a sign of welcome. At last we were there!

Essay 53

The Corner of Luthuli and Zulu Roads

It is a very humid day in Kwa-Mashu; summer has finally claimed its time. We are sitting outside the house built by the apartheid government in the early years of Kwa-Mashu. My family was very lucky to get a house next to the bus stop. Kwa-Mashu is well known for the high crime rate, and the place where all the crime occurs is right opposite my house: the bus stop.

DJ AKA-3 is counting down the top 40; Mendoza's new hit is Number 3. We're sitting and watching the events on the corner. On the right-hand side stands Teabozo the Chicken Dust man. He has taken his T-shirt off, and he is sweating. The chicken is burning in the orange flames of a drum of an old car.

This is the simple life in the township: gambling at night and smoking dagga. The bus stop can be a dangerous place, but it has a good view to spot the police because it is on top of the hill. I've seen people losing large amounts of money and losing their cars; lots of families have been shattered by gambling.

APPENDIX E: Students' Written Comments

I. GRADE 9 STUDENTS

Journal

I would say eighty seven percent of the posters in class make sense, they give me hope and confidence. They make the room look alive. Just by looking at the posters you can see the talent.

This room is very interesting. "It's a wildroom" you taste the knowledge + smell the future.

Dear Mr Journal

This whole thing about your "thises". I like what you done with the classroom because I find a new poster to read. You are the coolest teacher and the best in my way because you know what we like and your methods, Dude they rock.

No words, no brains

Journals

Some posters in the classroom express feelings. I don't enjoy looking at posters in the classroom. In my opinion I have put expressing words in my posters...Some people's posters in the classroom don't make a sense at all and which is crab...

Journal

Listening to the music and writing the same time really works because it makes me think really hard and I can concentrate for a long time. It mad me be relaxed. The one that I liked was when we read poems and we relaxed while we listen to music and also the poems. That made me feel like I am fresh from the box and that made me feel good for the entire day it was very enjoyable.

I have learnt something about myself that I can concentrate in something when I listen to music and that is good because I have learnt something about myself that I didn't know.

Gernals

The room which I'm in is full of idea's and creativity. Poster gives messages; not to say all of them are nice or attractive, but they all have the same thing in common they give messages that speak to people...

Journals

It comes to my amazement that people love it when it rains. I don't like it hot nor cold.

As I sit in Mr Kusner's class, the pupils chatter or talk to their friends.

I hear laughter from the back and I'm suppose to write a journal the classic music is playing and it's sweet melodies just keep on giving me fresh, bright, new ideas.

I look out the window, but just then I hear Mike saying "*How were ma!*"

As I was saying, I seem to hear another sound it's the rain, splashing down on or near the kit room.
I look at it and it's showers that seem to splater.

The sky is clear,...it's grey and white...As I step out the cold wind surround me and brushes against my face, my knees seem cold.
The trees outside are so beautiful and they stand tall and firm. They are green and brown.

But the leaves seem to move in a marching or calm way as if they are saying dance with us. I look in the sky I see one bird of some sort from far away...I feel my body shiver with cold, so I decide to go inside but...

The music gets louder, and so are it's beats and instruments then it stops.

English

I love the atmospher of his class, but the thing I love the most is that the teacher uses your drawings to fill the class and I must say this is the most intresting class in the whole school...I have learnt to write beautiful work I might not write like everybody else but I am imprested with my work.

I love it when we play sir's music although at the beginning I though it was boring but now I know the reason for that kind of music, it for us to relax and think of the work we are doing or listening to

Journals

To tell you the truth I think the room goes with the package (teacher & room). It has got a different atmosphere from other, which is great and different. I think I am getting used to this style, because I am seeing it for the first time, it might mainly have to do with the way someone who owns the place feeling and from what I see they feel very colourful or they love colour.

Then there is the music with the posters. To tell you the truth I really think it goes with the music that we usually listen to in lessons, but I really can't get the hang of it.

Journals

The smell of fresh air and the sight of the bright yellow sun in my face I get out of my registration class to enter my first lesson, which is English. As my class forms their line, My English teacher Mr. Cusener is standing in front of the door handing out a crayon and a piece of paper. One by one my classmates and I enter...the minute we enter we hear the sounds of soft, peaceful music And a slight whisper of a lady's voice straight away I was excited and ready to do what ever work was requested of us. And then the influence of all the wonderful and colourful posters...sparkled me.

All about school

In the classroom, the walls filled with pictures, colourful enspiring pictures, everywhere you look there are pictures the classroom environment is interesting but very crouded there are to many pictures on the walls it make the classroom look very untidy and busy.

When writing Journals or essays there is often music the music helps me think better, but sometime it gets very annoying especially when it feels like the songs are dragging, I don't know it might be my emagination. It also feels very uncomfortable cause there are to many desks, it doesn't really give you a chance to move freely.

What I think we are learning a English that is not ordanery we do thing that do not result to English only we learned thing like foreign frases like desha vu mabye the spelling is wrong but with sir we learned spelling & grama is the one of the importance of English But it is not the most important thing.

The writing skills were encwered we great the most important think about giving your story live we need to giving it adjective & discribe what really happens in the situation you are in...

I think it has helped me with my righting and now I can right something and be able to expresse my self in a way I neet to ...I know what to put in eg focus, passion, the truth, pun and many more but the truth is that I'm a better thinker then before.

Journal

...I must admit that I really enjoyed English, because I have learned a knack of expressing myself to others. I learned a lot of new words and I must say that the posters... displayed in B12 are very creative whoever did it. I really enjoyed the music. The real interesting thing about Mr. Kusner's class is Mr. Kusner himself....I really had fun, enjoyed myself and learnt something at the same time.

Eng:

It was a clear black night, a clear white moon. I was on the streets trying to relax. So I bounced to the east so I could get some funk. Swollen from my ride chilling on doves. I just hit the east side of the LBC trying to find my old friend Mr lwaji G.

This room?! I have learn't alot in this room, how to relax even though thse posters freak me out. I don't feel comfortable. But I have to admit that these posters protray a positive enviroment because if you see that you can't focus the first thing that you do is look at the walls, & when you look at the walls you see these posters with words & you get ideas running in your head.

Even though it's hard to write an essay, when you're in the K room you just see yourself with these ideas in your head. I think that English, Zulu & Afrikaans teachers should do this!

Journal

Today's another day of journals and I had an option on writing on how I think my writting was for the 100% essay.

I think I am quite satisfied with the criticism I got. It was a matter of just arranging a few gramma mistakes, a title, and putting more detail and focus into it. I was more than happy with the compliments I got because it showed I had done atleast something that was worth my while. I know now that when you're something to someone or just writting a book or essay that to always concertrate and you'll really get best results for sure.

I know it's not perfect yet but I got the idea that I could just get there with a push in the right direction I heard some wonderful essay's and heard what real detail is. I didn't know that I could put detail on something but I got a compliment on it so everything seems to be looking up. My Journals "as far as I've heard" are coming along very well. I have had alot of inspirations and I have got the chance of explore my head.

I have had a very good environment in order have the chance to relax. I have heard good strong verbs learnt a bit of foreign language and learnt about different "Gods". The posters have contributed to this "developing" in writing idea. I see Big strong verbs, good colour and practicly everything in mind.

Right now I'm listening to a more R&B kind of music but as much as I wouldn't like to admit it, it seems I'm starting to like more relaxing music like 'Baroque' music. I have had an experience where I nearly fell asleep listening to it.

I have had quite a couple of good essays some of us in the class can do although 80% of the class has to still get the big picture and actually put someone into the actual place where they are basing their essay/story.

English Journal

In this journal I'd like to express my feelings towards Mr Kusner's English. I really find the posters that are at the walls helpful because they've adjust my mind and made me or welcomed me to the world of english writing.

I enjoy the sessions whereby Mr Kusner plays music and reads essays. I really find it relaxing and I find it easy to learn different types of writing...I also think that the idea of writing journals is good because we can express our feelings. I think that if we carry on writing essays...by the time we are in grade 12 we will be very good.

How my writting has improve

My writing has improved because I'm able to focus my writing. I'm totally amaze at what I have im able to write. I have compared my last year's work and has saw that it has improve....am able to understand word I never thought I could.

I must say, since the beginning of the year writing has improved in a way. I can consider my writing before as a grade 6's writing, but now it is really matured. What I do now I find out what do people find exciting to read and hopefully I come up with something that will catch your attention one way or the other, because where there's a will theres a way. I usually find that way.

9E might be a very badly behaved class but there is one thing I like about our class, the music sir plays and the posters on the wall...(which) make our class look beautiful and they show the work that other children did in the past years and sometimes they give us clues of what is about to be done and the show how other children do their work. Some posters encourages us to work harder. The music...is so relaxing and gives ideas and it makes a person work better and it is enjoyable...

Journals

This journal is all about how my writing skills have improved from since I started Grade nine. Over-all there has been an improvement in my skills and I have learnt a thing or two, or much more than I even know. I want to start with the posters in Sir class, they add an effect that automatically blends in with my attitude and personality, by this I mean that, I feel free when I'm in the English class, I feel like I'm at home; the posters never, although helped me develop any skills unfortunately I used to read one or two of them, but never thought why I was reading them in the first place. I do that I would have learnt from them but its still the same thing because the year hasn't ended yet and then there's still a chance to continue reading them and read them well. Now I want to write about something that really took my writing the next level, you'll be surprised at what it is, and you'll actually sit down and think about it, the thing that improved my skills was the one and only Sir's Music CD's...if it wasn't for the music my writing would not have improved or picked up at all.

Thanks to Sir's music, which is not only rhythemic, but soothing aswell my writing almost tipped of the scales. The sound makes your brain go to thinking mode and makes your brain assess every sentence that leaves your mind mistakeless and almost perfect, the music is so soothing it made me fall into a deep sleep in less than five minutes, I dozed off until the last three remaining minutes of that lesson. But I always save the best for last, he is the man that makes me wake up & come to school, he the one that practically made my writing skills break the scales...you better belive it sir it wasn't the posters or the music (well just a bit) but it was you...

When I get into the class I got greeted by name and then I go and sit then we get greeted all together. There are posters all over the walls in the class. We then sit down and then get our tasks. It doesn't feel like High School it feels like tertiary.

There are posters on the wall some are about literature and some are just about adverts. There is one that says Beauty is inside.

Journal

As I walk into the English class I see sir and I salute, he salutes back. I sit down on that wooden chair with steel and put my bag on top of the new desks we have. Sir says we have to write an essay and already I'm thinking what to write about.

I look in to the wall and inspired by the poster that I see, I especially look at details which is written in black on an A4 sheet of paper, then the next word is focused which is written in pink and shaded with yellow at the background. I think details and focused that will do the trick.

I take the blue pen with my clean hand and start to flow, at the back I can here the beat of music. We were playing D-12 devilsknight CD. I say to my self if these thing can inspire me to write what was stoping me.

Now when I write with passion all that frustration of writting an essay has dissapeared. When writing I express my self and deccribe the atmosphere I'm in by writing down every thing I see, I feel and smell. I write about something that has happened and I try to remember every thing that happened. Thanx to the power of the pen.

I think the posters is the class room are good. It was very good thinking from whoever puts them up. It is good because there are good drawing on them and in some of them posters there are selabrities which I like very much.

The things I don't like about the class room. First the posters are all over each other and if there is one poster then the posters must be all over the class neatly no space only posters. I also think the certins are a total turn-off.

There are just a few ingredients missing for my writing to be 101%. Things like details more focus and my writing would be off the hole. At least I've achieved some good results on my writing, my last graph really pointed me in a right direction, and this is the beginning for me. My goal now is to try in any way to improve on it and I will get there just more effort and determination will do.

Journal

Well when I first saw this class, I found the posters quite perculiar. I did not really consider that these poster could help students on their writing.

Recently as I have wrote essays in this class. Last year my writing was not that good even though I have tried to make my writing better last. In this class my writing has improved drastically gotten better and better. Reason being that the posters stimulate your brain (eg) This poster on top of the board which says "focus" meaning that your essay must be focus. I have adapted this in my response to litrerture whih has helped to improve my mark in it. All these points have really...stimulated my brain in english to another level.

Journal

This room is fool of inspiration, all the posters of words on the walls. All my best drawings, poems, rap & writings is made here. As I'm writing this, I'm inspired by the room & all its sources of information. I have drawn a lot of pictures to illustrate some of the words like simile & hyperbowl, pun & climax. I have a lot of interest in writting & drawing these illustrations it gives me practise for my other work.

English journal

English is a different subject. You have a good time in every lesson you endure with Mr. Kusner. The moment you enter the room, you feel relaxed and calmed down. English is not like Science or History. There is no right or wrong answer (except for Language work.)

When we read the 100% essay (with the soothing music), everyone seemed to relax and all the comments were intelligent and really helped everyone to improve their writing skills. But I could not shut my eyes and concentrate, when we were reading the poems. It's just does not come forcefully, it comes naturally.

Sometimes it is stressing when we...do a lot of written work.

All in all, English is by far the best subject in the school. Chaos time is the best. The music we play (Wolfgang Mozart) is an interesting different yet soothing kind of music. I like it but sometimes it does not affect me and sometimes just bore me...

2. GRADE 11 STUDENTS

The wild room is our English class. Our English teacher Mr Kusner. His abit strange from the other teacher that I like most about him. His unik he got his own way of making people feel at home.

Every day we enter the class of creation thing that we did ourself. The room is fulled with message on the wall. Educational mssage which incarage us in doing beter.

For the past few days we have been reading hundred pecent essay and we had background music. You see in class we have a cd player. It is relaxing and make you think dip in the issues of life. And you under stand.

The method of comenting ofther your essay has be read is nice it gives you ideas. It a real help to us the learns.

-Nuh

The English Leson for me

You must be thinking oh no another boring English lesson, an old man telling us how we should spell, write and talk, well not me. I find the English language very facinating.

For me its not about speaking or spelling correctly its about enjoying every minute of the lesson the little jokes we crack and the silliest mistakes we make.

The best part is the reading of essay aloud and the playing of classical music it makes me feel like I am slowly drifting away to a peaceful place and gives me ideas for my essay draft.

English in never boring its all a matter of understanding the art of the language. You get very good poems, stories and plays and the best English book ever written the Dictionary 'I love that book'.

Journals in my English Class

Immediately when you are told to write a journal at the same you will be obviously confused. But what will realy inspire me is all the posters around.

To get to the points I will be talking about I writing about the English class I go to and I seriously enjoy that class it's all colour full and you really feel like you really at school the vibe of the room gets you non-stop.

For journals who be confused at the first time but in the end just by looking around an idea will strike your mind due to all these posters.

But it's all thanks to the best teacher which I wish I would be with till matric Mr Kusner. He is an inspiration I wanted to be a teacher but I found my hidden talent 9 years ago and I'm in performing which I wouldn't change. But I'd never forget kind Mr Kusner. I will always find you and your class an inspiration.

Mr Journal

The wildroom (our English class) is very colourful with posters of different encouraging words with positive meanings. When looking around you see words that are usually used in Essays, Journals and stories but we never take notice of it. I'm talking about the words like focus, detail, colour, smell and more. It's the reader a clear discription.

We had a lesson where our teacher was reading a few incredible Essay while the music was playing, that was really relaxing. It only required attention, listening skills and silence, the second time we did this we fell fast asleep. It made feel free forgot all about our worries, felt like we are in heaven, floating on a bubble.

There was a time when Sir was reading their 100% Essays (excluding mine, cause I was absent on the due date) and comments were passed. It was really encouraging but others based the comments personal instead of focusing on the writing. It was also the same experience for the speeches but it was for a good course to help us when we get to Matric for the Moderation.

About my essay I thought it was going to be total rubbish but thank you for writing good work. I'll work on what needs to be worked on so that I can make it perfect. Writing that essay was a great experience although it didn't turn out the way that I hoped it was going to turn out to be.

I want to learn how to use words and how to prepare for an essay so that maybe next year I'll release a book called My Reflection, I'm still working on it. Its basically about a girl who has no friends and she's very insecure about her life.

English Journal

What I learnt from writing these 100 percent essay's is that when you write an essay you shouldn't tell them what was happening but show them with your writing. Your words should describe the atmosphere which is happening in your story, and you should just get straight to the point.

Journal

Well I wont lie and say I enjoyed the first time my teacher said we needed to write an English essay, I felt like it would be boring, but not for long.

Im starting to enjoy writing, especially essays and I can see, my writing improving everytime. Lately I've been comparing my first essay to my current essay I'm writing, I can see a very big improvement and see now that my writing has potential.

Everytime I put my pen on the paper I can feel that I have alot of concentration in what Im writing then I use to have when writing my past essays. I can feel the "power of the pen". My past essays had no details and no focus

on what I'm writing on, but now my essays are focused and have details where required. All the comment my teacher wrote on my essays, good or bad, I paid alot of attention to them to improve my writing.

I'm proud to say my writing has improved alot, I just hope my teacher also thinks so.

Journal

It was great for me because in the school I came from, we didn't do all the writing that we do in this school. We only writed essay when they were for marks and the things we did there are totally different than the thing are done in this school.

The first time we did, it didn't work for me because I wasn't use to writing and when we kept on writing I enjoyed it because I think improved my English in writing a little bit and the strong English word that you teached us some work for me and some didn't...

Beyond the borders of writing

I truly have learnt something new in English. It extended my borders of writing from what taught by other teachers about being formal to writing something.

The fact that I wrote about something I see everyday made it easier. I could even write a full page about waking up in the morning. It added feeling to my writings from the lectures that I used to write.

The fact that there was music playing in the background did more harm than good. The other students were always passing stupid and unnecessary comments. Everybody ended up listening to the music instead of writing essays.

The fact that we have to write detail confused other people. They ended up saying things like "walking, walking, crying, crying, or wearing a red and white sneakers his head was big".

The most interesting thing was that he didn't check spelling mistakes and other grammar mistakes.

Journal

It has been a long try period and I have really tried to impress. In my first attempt of my essay was just doing it to finish it and handed in. I didn't eventhing long and hard because I thought it was just a waist of time. But on my second attempt I thought long and hard but it was still not inough thinking long and hard. The second essay was not inough detail. On my third one I thought of my essay for days and looked at every thing that was happening that I have not thought about. This essay has helped me to think deep and logicaly. I would say this has help me lot because know I didn't write to finish I first think about something before I write. I must say the logos we wrote really encarage a person and it would make people positive. But someboy who has never learnt this way would think it is a waist of time and the environment of this class has a welcoming feeling it like you are free to do anything and think freely and be yourself.

The 100% essay really benefited me because I knew where my mistakes stood and what wrong things I wrote. And I also learnt to wright proply and also how to think like a profesional wrihter. Writing the 100% essay was a really good thing for everyone in class it really help a lot of people because they knew when they got a really low mark for the term they knew that they could depend on the 100% Essay to pick up thier mark...

As far as my writing is concerned, well I wont say it has made any much difference with the way it was before. Nothing much as happened which can influence me to write any better. Sorry but there's nothing much I can write.

For me first it was a task a big task but I enjoyed it, well it was difficult for me because Mr K---- lost my essay 3 times and I had to write a new one every time. But listening to other people's essay's I enjoyed it a lot because I got new ideas.

Now I have learnt something

I have learnt to improve my writing, by doing the journals. The way I think now when I am about to write is different than before. Now I don't have to think for boring topic, it's a matter to hold the pen in my hand and write till I finish. Writing these journal is also good because you can express anything you fell talking from vulgar language to anything which you wish to write.

I also thing the kind of teaching you do is your own style and I have never seen it before I am talking about chaos time, listining to music when we are writting journal. Even now writting this journal we are given a privilege to listen to our own music, and this make us able to concentrate on what we are writting. There is also something I also notic when we arecoming to your lesson and I think it increases our work ethic, when we come inside your classroom you stand by the door and greet us all by our names, and I really do first that amazing, because there are 42 of us you are able to remember all our names. Thank you for all the time you give to us and able to take care of 42 student, which I think you never did before in your teaching carrer.

Journal

My experiences of wrihting "essays" and journals, improved the way and style of writing that I had wrote before and for this idea I thank Mr. C Kusner.

This year I learn't that an essay is not just a piece of writing, it must be interesting, full of life and it must have images.

Everything was good except for the music, I mean, I love hip-hop, R&B, Slowjam and some other kinds of music but classic music didn't cut it. It did the opposite effect of giving me inspiration and caused a slow down of my writing because the music wasn't that good, coz its hard concentrating when there is a loud noise in the background that your not familiar to.

Other than that we all love coming to English and this is the class that I look forward to...

See I am a hip-hop artist and English essays really helped improve my lyrics and language.

Here I am sitting in my English class my teacher is Mr Kusner and Next to me is my friend Nuh we a playing on of my favourite song Growing pain I don't know the Artist yet. But I like this song because it explains what happens in my life. The bad stuff.

Well I don't really want to go far but I just want let you know that wrihting helps me a lot. I feel much better when I wright my problems down then talking to some one because people gurge you and they don't understand writing makes feel free to say anything I want. And the paper and pen are my best friends.

When I wright I get to solve the problem myself I find all the solutions myself and I don't regreat it but what I hate most is when people go through my stuff and find wrihting matirials. And they would come back and ask about it. I really hate that because my stuff is mine and it personal. I don't go through other peoples because I know how it feels like when they tough mine.

Wrihting has got me going very strong and another thing wrihting with the music on helps mc too.

It helps me to think fast and clearly it amazing how many pages I can wright in 15 min. And also how deep in my heart I can go. I even write things that I didn't reliaise were happening to and the feeling I had.

When I read that over again I could find my depression and my sadness. I feel it important to wright your problems.

And then my favourite song with my friend Nuh The out cast. We started dancing and remained us the best time we had together. We sang nicely.

That the End

English Gemal

Englis class is like a tree full of monkeys, some climbing up and some climbing down. Some even fall of the tree.

This year was a littlel defference in term of stading and the hole proses of teaching. Mr Kusner was my new Englis teacha and his on new form of teaching. It is caled sajestive peadion. I reallie did not andestand this hol proses. And there was a lot of things that he did an a deffirant game one of them was stading by the door and greating every on when they go in.

The one we did for the hol year was the 100% Assay. Which you rout ones and he red it to the class and make coments about in hope that he coments help you to the write a better assay in the next drafet...

Journal Entry

I as an individual really enjoyed doing journal entries because it really helped me improve my writing skill. It was fun because it put my mind at rest and just write what came to my mind. It was good also because the music kept us at a carm mood. Although the music wasn't that good but it kept us focused. It has been the first time that I experienced something like that and it really got me wondering. Besides my work had a chance to be corrected everytime I had made a mistake. It also prepared me for matric and gave me the ability to want to write essay's. It also made me feel what I was writing about and actual experience it. It made me feel like I was there. It also gave me a change to let my imagination go wild and write what I felt and have no set topic to write about.

English Test

From my experiance from the 100% essays was very nice The day we wrote our final copy when the music was play it really relaxed my and made me write better. Have the choice to write my Essay so many times, to improve on my essay, I was very grateful. Have the music on made me use my imagination alot more. I really enjoyed writing my 100% Essay cause I really got a good opportunity to get a good mark. After writing my 100% Essay I am getting used Detail more and focusing on the point of the essay. I would like too know whether we really got 100% for the essay or not.

Today's Journal is supposed to comment on the classes setting and I would say it is an organised mess though it needs a few touch-ups and you probably thinking I'm sucking up but I'de rather suck a fizz pop the experiances in class have been good yet bad because I enjoy learning and having music at the same time but I sometimes get irritated when learning music is being played for some reason everything that I heard I still remember now..

...Hey the most juicy thing I've heard is the essays though I thought I was going to get a lot of criticism from my peers knowing that I am the loudest blabbermouth...I haven't learnt anything except for bringing lunch money when it's cold because I could do with a cup of coffee or hot chocolate...now let me continue with invisible ink.

Ever since I was taught by Mr Kusnrer I know a lots and I begin to understand his teaching. I just wish that he was my teacher from Grade 8 maybe I'll be brilliant.

About the essays I think Mr Kusner you are great the way you told us to make our Essays by making it living not by lecturing....The class is great because is decorated by words I mean teaching words...the music exercises our minds...

My writing this year

Looking back on the past two terms, I really think my writing has improved. It was when I had to write my 100% essay that I think I realised that I don't need to be a focused person to have good writing skills.

In order to be able to write some thing good you don't have to be good but it just all about being creative and beang able to put what on your mind on paper in a way that if person had to read your essay that person would enjoy every part of it.

I personally think that when you start your writing you should not really show what your whole writing is about but as the reader get to understand your writing, because writing is about making the reader create a picture of what you wrote and it should appear like a play to the readers mind.

(another entry) I think I have improved a lot in my writing this year. I can see where my writing needed to be improved and I have learnt a lot of things that will help make my writing better.

One of the things that I really think I'm going to benefit from that I learnt is to focus and at the same time be accurate and simple. After I started to do this and put detail in my writing my essays became alive. I say this because any body that reads them felt the same way I did when writing them.

I think another important thing that I have learnt is that any body can be a good writer. It just about being detailed and focus. I never really liked writing, but now I do because I know how to go about writing in a way that will be real and interesting to the reader.

I know for a fact that every body has potential in writing it just that they also need to know how to interprit what on the minds down on paper. If every body could get the lessons we did, I think a lot of good writers will be discovered.

Listening to music in English lessons are quite nice for the simple reason that it clears your brain and frees your soul. It makes you feel like your floating on a big, white cloud, that you going to fall through but you don't really. My mind romes places that no-body would even dream when sleeping. My Mind leaves and comes back when the music stops it's as if it has an electronic connection with each other. Music is the answer to creative writting. Just as now my eyes are closing and my mind wants to escape from a hell hole! We should have music in all our classes, because it is what we need to succeed. Music makes the lesson fun and also effective. Maybe if every lesson had music our marks would be so much better because we'd be doing something that we don't really like but at the same time listening to something we love!

Journals

The "WildRoom", a lot of things happen here. Firstly I'd like to substantiate the fact that we have rather unusually intelligent teacher who comes up with all these "wild" sets of work which tend to help me in particular in many areas of my life.

Creative writing has been the major issue for the past seven months. I've learnt quiet a few new words that I picked up from either other people's rough drafts or the vocabulary board. Before coming to the "wildroom" I'd never known that ANON meant SOON. Simple words like DÉJÀ VU and AZURE have flickered into my vocab

box. I sometimes use these words when I'm talking to a girl whom I doth be fond of. Having ANIDOTAL conversations with other people has helped me realize that all I am and all I now really constitutes from the "WILDROOM".

I've gained a lot of self-assurance, determination, and most of all intelligent and constructive thinking from my wild teacher. He certainly knows how to motivate youngsters, maybe he class might not realise this because simply they refuse to. I've witnessed that when learning for a test I should play classical or slow jam music in order for me to reach that point of relaxation before letting my mind flow and therefore I become the creator of CREATIVE WRITING.

If there was anything I'd change in our "WildRoom" it would be strictly based at my fellow learners. Moving their places in which they sit would help to reduce the high disciplinary problems that normally arouse in class. Sorry to use the word "class" since I'd like to more or less relate to it as a room filled with a vibrant and educational atmosphere.

English Journal

It has been 10 months already and I think is the first time I'm going to write a good journal. Firstly I should express my feelings: It has done a lot for my gramma and spelling. I thought it was stupid at first, but now I've seen it on a different level. It is good because I'm able to be myself on paper and focus. When it comes to my essay writing, I'm confident enough to say that I have improved and believe that there is still room for improvement. I have included details and focused on my details.

Unrevealed Mindwork

Through veins the words travel through an instant, The vianal plays an instrument. Then a sudden reaction happens, there's a red robot saying Stop! Day dreaming rushes away then the words cross in every direction where human sense lay.

The experierencing and inspiring things I've achieved so far, is a great achievement. In a way writing Journals was something that free-ed my mind.

Today I really don't feel like writing things, the thought of it makes my head spin. After reading the essays, some people are angry. Because of the comment they were getting about their essays.

As I look around me, they are all focused on what they are doing makes me loose my concentration. I'm thinking what should I write about I thought that I would get an idea as I was going along but I got nothing to write about.

The speech oh no!! Why do we have to do the speech thats a whole lot of stress. Anyway after listening to all these essays almost everyone lacks focus on their essay. And what really interesting is that we get an idea that whos essay you are reading and normally the class is always right.

Journal: 100%

I liked the opportunity to get an A+ mark in English. The classic music just didn't give me the inspiration, it caused me to go cold in at the same time old.

Mozart is the worst music I'd have to listen to, I've already heard enough of it in my mums phone. It is called Mozart 40 in it's case.

Back to da 100% essay, since I did the 100% essay at my pozzie, chillin and listening to da good music,...I was inspired enough to write a whole anthology of good stuff and bad stuff happening at my home town...As I wrote this merchandise and it really rocked. I'm really sure and certain that I will reach the 100% mark since writing

every single word of the essay inspired to do a lot. Ideas were flowing like the Nile River...it was easy as ABC...not enough pages were given to me. I needed a whole encyclopaedia if I had to talk about my life. Thanks for the good essay. Hasta la vista!

Journals

When we started writing our essays for the first time during the first term, I thought it would be one of those essays that you write about your holidays. But I was wrong.

When I finished writing my first draft about my time at Empangeni, I got new ideas from the teacher, the posters around the class, and the music which helped us relax. And just the general vibe in the class helped me to focus on my essay, and the most important of all my essay had a lot of details.

When I was writing my third draft I was feeling very confident in what I was writing and a lot of ideas were coming to mind. If I got stuck and don't know what to write I just relax for about 3 minutes looking at the posters in the class to give me some ideas, and if I am going the right way of doing my essay.

Now that we are in the 3rd term I have written about 6 drafts and I can say that I have learnt so much on how to construct my essay. And this will also help me very much next year when we have to write essays in matric.

Writing the essay wasn't easy for me because when I write I want to have a topic. I was a bit difficult when I was told that I could write about anything I wanted. But maybe it was good for the other students because it gave them some kind of freedom.

Dear sir

I would first like to thank you for letting us listen to our music, but the most important thing is that you have really helped me with my style of writing, now I see the importance of putting in detail in my writing. As I like drawing I feel comfortable in writing the detail, because it makes me want to write more and paint a really picture of what is happening in the writing.

This is a really perfect way of exposing my little writing talent I have in me. I think my writing skill has improved from 0% to 95,5% and I would be very happy if you teach everybody this way of expressing themselves. And your style of teaching is Kooooool sure.

APPENDIX F: The Essays Awarded the Full “100%”

Essay One: Grade 9

How My Day Was Spoiled

Early this morning, I saw a dead cat lying on the side of the road with all its fur taken off. I stopped to look at it. I crouched down and gazed at its skin. Its head was turned away from me, and already ants were starting to eat its eyes.

Across the road, a skinny, almost dead dog was watching me with jealous eyes, waiting for me to leave. I poked the cat with a stick, turned it over, and took a close look at its stomach. Not the ants, not the dog, not even I could do anything more to it. It was like a pink, naked body; deader than dead and beyond pain.

Later, when I arrived at the Umngandu Railway Station, I saw a dead man lying in the road. He was naked too. Somebody had torn up a black plastic bin liner and covered him, but his thick, pointy toes stuck out. A man with short pants and an orange T-shirt said he was killed in the night by the naughty boys and they took all his clothes.

I pushed through the crowd and crouched down to get a closer look at him, but I was shoved away by an adult who knew better.

An old woman said that children shouldn't see things like this. I had seen a skinned cat and worse. And anyway I was no longer a child.

“Those tsotsis have no shame,” the woman said to her friend as they walked away from the circle of people around the dead man.

“They could have at least left him his underwear,” her friend replied.

At least they left him his skin. If they'd taken that too, he'd be pink like the dead cat. Instead, he looked like a sleeping black man.

I missed the train to school because I watched what happened: a taxi took the dead man away to the mortuary. I also missed the train because I was thinking about Xolani. I've seen a dead man before, but never a cat with all its fur taken off. Nobody cares about a skinned cat lying in the road, and I didn't feel like going to school anymore, so I went home and had a fight with my mother.

I told her about the dead man who looked like my brother's friend and the skinned cat, and why I had missed the train. It all made sense to me.

She said she was going to call my teacher to give me punishment when I got back to school.

And that is how my day was spoiled.

My Masks

Growing up in a typically violent township like KwaMashu, I had an urge to become superior to other guys at school, but I never thought of myself as an academically stable learner. Every day, I wake up and put on my mask. The person everyone sees here at school is the direct opposite of who I really am.

In my life, I have to fit into three masks in order to maintain my pride and goals

Firstly, every day I have to put on a “school” mask: I try my very best to be the best I can be- which isn’t really me. I become this good, listening, constructive, and loyal person as I put on my school uniform each morning.

As the day unwinds, I leave school and become more and more tense since I have to go back to my miserable life at home. At least at school I get the recognition I deserve, and that makes me not take notice of the unpleasant moments or incidents that occur at home. As I open the front gate at home, I know that there will be some sort of trouble or situation that will change the pleasant day I’ve had at school.

As I enter the yard, I put on my sad, traumatized mask. For I know that whatever will happen inside the house, I will take the blame for it; every little incident that occurs at home will come back to me. Living with an older brother and his girlfriend can be extremely stressful. My brother, who has looked after most of the family affairs as I grew up, has certainly changed due to the evil witch- his girlfriend.

She has a very bad influence on my brother’s life. She doesn’t like me at all. Ever since my mother died from a mental illness in 1997, she came to stay with me and my brother. We needed someone to cook, clean the house, and take our mother’s place in the home. Of course, I was very young and had no say in the matter. As I grew up, I was violently abused by her, and in 1999, I decided to leave home and live with my aunt.

Being the love coward that he is, my brother never even once came to see me to find out why I had left home. My aunt took my brother to court in a dispute to sell our home. I wasn’t told of this until the summons messenger came to my aunt’s house and found me alone.

Asking my aunt about the issue made her send me back home since she lost the court case. I felt so stupid when I was on the bus with all my clothes just three years after having left home.

The entire three years I’d been away from home made me become a stranger in my own house. As I opened the gate, my brother was busy washing his new taxi . He looked at me like I was an enemy. He told me how he’d fought for the house alone and that I had wanted the house to be sold because I was staying with my aunt.

I briefed him about the whole incident happening without my knowledge. He didn’t believe me at first, but later on came to terms with the idea. Luckily for me, the evil witch wasn’t home, so we had a manly conversation. I unpacked everything in my room and left to see some old friends. Since then, I have been a punching bag and a threat absorber. My brother hits me whenever he is having a bad day. He cares nothing for me; he doesn’t even fetch my school reports. I am always told how useless I am at home, and so I always have my gloomy and depressed mask on at home. We don’t speak; all I do is go home and sleep. I don’t get food. I am told that I am old enough to be a husband now and that I should see to finding my own food. My brother will only help me with water and electricity.

When I move out of home to the neighbourhood, I have the last mask that I use: the “aggressive and violent” mask. I am known for stealing clothing in famous designer label shops, housebreaking, and man robbery. I don’t like taking people’s belongings but just can’t seem to find an alternative way to get money to feed and dress myself.

God knows that I am not a violent, aggressive, and cold-hearted person, but what makes me do the things I’ve done and still do in my personal life? I’d do anything to leave home but still come to school, but there is no way anyone would want to take me into their home. That is why I have to keep striving for the best in order to finish school and get whatever job I can lay my hands on and start earning my lawful income.

Out of all three masks, I prefer my “school” mask. This is the mask I wear and feel proud of who I am. Without school, I’d be such a different person. Every morning, I wake up earlier than I need to since I’m always looking forward to leaving the dungeon of evil and getting to school.

God knows that I shall always be true to him at all times since He helps me through everything I do. All my strength comes from Him.