Alessandra d'Epiro

THE MENTAL HYPERTEXT

COUNSELLING IN LEARNING AS A LIFELONG PROCESS

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August 2003

Bookcover: Salvador Dalì, *"Remorse or sphinx embedded in the
sand"*, 1931, by Dario Ottolenghi.

To God my life
my life to God

Collana: *Teoria e Storia dell'educazione*

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Pour mon frère Oreste:
"Mon cadeau pour toi... Le soleil!".

Aknowledgements:

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Foreword

Man is a learner throughout his life, from childhood to adulthood. As a student, as a worker and as a performer one has to pass several examinations along the way.

Man is the functional part of society as a system and the relationship between human beings is based on communication in the "awareness of lifelong learning", as a continuous lifetime process by which it is possible to exchange reciprocal messages with each other regarding personal knowledge, experience and culture: the more you grow, the more you learn and the more useful you become in society.

Man should be a good learner not only able to learn but also to communicate his learning to an audience in order to be successful at school or work and to improve society with his contribution. Counselling in learning effectively means helping people to help themselves.

Explaining the process of learning is the starting point to prevent or solve problems in all careers; suggesting a possible orientation by using a method of learning as a self-training and self-assessment process may be useful as a means of communicating in lifelong communication which is necessary to achieve man's goals as a student, as a worker and as a performer.

The "mental hypertext" as a method of learning is learner – centred and it is based on Rogers' Counselling (Rogers, C.R. 1951), on Lozanov's Suggestopedia (Lozanov, G. 1978) and on the Counselling Theory and Skills learnt at the University of Malta to which I wish to say that I am grateful.

The Authoress

Preface

The stresses of life in the present age have many times led people to the brink of despair. Children, young people, middle aged people and old people all need to face harsh realities brought about by all the complexities that encompass a person's life.

A person has to deal with a complex development in childhood, sometimes made even more stressful by a difficult upbringing, then try to make inroads in education, where coping with an ever changing system based mostly on performance is the order of the day. The same person will then try to decide on a career/job from what is presented and available by an opportunity structure that reflects the needs and policies of the powers that be. The same person will have to deal with situational difficulties that may arise like change of career, or redundancy and unemployment, as well as personal difficulties in establishing and breaking up of intimate relationships, taking care of one's own family, parenting, dealing with mid-life crises and impending old age.

All this has led to an interest and a greater understanding of life development, and a growth of the helping professions including Counselling. As people grow older, they reassess their life choices in order to redefine their possibilities of attaining idealised goals. Some of these goals may be unattainable because of age and other circumstantial difficulties. Some researchers report that many people live in frustration because they cannot pull themselves out or cope with a difficult situation. Others have "learnt" to be in difficult situations because of traumas suffered during childhood or adolescence.

Counselling may be an opportunity for people to understand and deal with limiting behaviour. People sometimes think that Counselling is "advising". It is certainly not. It is the direct opposite of that. Any good counsellor would try to enhance the client's independence and skills so that the latter would be able to carve a life that is meaningful and not limited by fears and constraints, while at the same time aiming for acceptance of situations or circumstances which cannot be changed.

The process is lifelong, as people go through different difficult processes throughout their life which are difficult to predict especially because of the nature of today's society hampered as it is by very fast technological and social changes.

I heartily commend Alessandra d'Epiro for her effort. I fondly remember her as a very diligent and very curious student, always ready to ask pertinent questions to others as well as to herself. What we are holding in our hands today, is the product of her curiosity and enthusiasm to share her own deep wisdom with others. This book is her very important contribution to Counselling and to Education.

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I. Introduction to the process of learning

The knowledge of the process of learning is the basis to understand and use personal potential in life to achieve positive results in all careers, both at school and work; a constructive comparison, by exchanging reciprocal experience as a chance of mutual enrichment in terms of culture and skills, is necessary in life.

Learning is composed of three inseparable stages:

1. Transmission of data to the outside: *Transfer* or External moment;
2. Reception, Elaboration and Memorization of data: *Self Transfer* or Internal moment;
3. Transmission of data to the outside: *Transfer* or External moment.

The learner as a student, worker or performer and the teacher as a source of information, may play different roles according to the three different moments:

1. External moment: The learner is the addressee of the teacher's information whereas the teacher is obviously the *addresser*[1];
2. Internal moment: The learner receives the teacher's information and reacts through elaborating, memorizing and internalising it;
3. External moment: The learner is the transmitter of the information marked by his own personality; the learner becomes addresser whereas the teacher, as a potential audience, becomes the addressee.

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[1] *Addresser:the sender of information.*

Learning involves a process in which information starts from the outside and arrives to the outside by passing through the mediation of the learner.

Learning may be compared to computer processing:

1. External Moment: Output: Emission of data;
2. Internal Moment: Input: Insertion of data;
3. External Moment: Output: Emission of data;

The three moments are connected together by the communication of information:

1. External Moment: The learner receives communication from others;
2. Internal Moment: The learner communicates within himself;
3. External Moment: The learner communicates with others.

It is important to analyse the three stages of learning.

External Moment

The teacher, the trainer, the videotape and audiotape are sources of information because they transmit audio-visual data such as voices, sounds, writings, and images. These sources play an active role in learning as they communicate with the learner in an accessible way. For example, the manager's language to explain to his employees the content of economic laws should be suitable to the occasion. So the possibility of the intelligibility of a message depends on the language used by the transmitter, both in form and content and in manner and matter: the language should change according to the features of the audience regarding culture, beliefs, age: major intelligibility gives major understanding.

The communication of the message between the speaker and the listener, or the writer and the reader, occurs when the message is transferred from the addresser to the addressee. The aim of the message is its own transmission.

The communication of the message occurs when the message itself is received in its right meaning:

Meaning of Transmission: A

Meaning of Reception: A.

The communication of the message does not occur when the message itself is not received in its right meaning:

Meaning of Transmission: A

Meaning of Reception: B.

Internal Moment

Observing the learner as the addressee of the message is studying his reaction to external information: the learner's behaviour may be characterized by initiative or not. The learner has no initiative when he just receives and accepts information from the transmitter.

The learner's predisposition to receive depends on his willingness and interest in the topic:

Major willingness and interest mean major predisposition to receive;

Minor willingness and interest mean minor predisposition to receive.

When the learner has neither willingness nor interest the message is not received even when it is clear and comprehensible. The teacher can arouse the learner's motivation by joining theory to practice, learning to living: the teacher should teach how to translate school-skills into work-skills and life-skills. The learner may be broad-

minded or narrow-minded in his inner acceptance or refusal of the external message.

The learner's inner acceptance or refusal may be disclosed by his posture as the physical manifestation to express broad/narrow-mindedness. The interviewee's head, looking down, and his folded arms may be the display of the rejection of communication: the interviewee does not show his intention of listening to the interviewer as well as his intention of being listened to by the interviewer.

The interviewee's correct posture may be the display of the realization of the communication with the external world: the interviewee shows his assertiveness in his intention of paying attention to the interviewer and of attracting the interviewer's attention. The features of the ideal physical attendance in Counselling are contained in the acronym SOLER: Squarely, Open, Leaning forward, Eye contact and Relaxed (Egan, G. 1998).

The learner has initiative when he elaborates external information by personalizing it.

The learner, as the student, learns or studies in this way:

1. He gathers the external data concerning a particular topic;
2. He selects data;
3. He puts data in a logical, chronological, alphabetical sequence;
4. He associates data for differences or similarities.

The learner memorizes when through the reiteration of a particular subject he can remember it not only for himself but also for others at the right time and place. Learning is completely useless if the learner cannot communicate it both in an oral and written form.

The way of receiving, elaborating and memorizing data depends on the personality of the student and changes according to it. The teacher's message is one for all stu-

dents but each student receives it differently, by transforming it in connection with his personal knowledge, ability, aptitude, habits and goals.

External Moment

The learner becomes the addresser of information when he communicates to an audience the message regarding his memorised learning, received and elaborated.

The student has to transmit his message to the teacher to accomplish his daily tasks or to get a good mark in his essays or examinations.

The student's language should be coherent, logical, correct in syntax and if necessary rich in technical words.

The teacher's evaluation is based on the student's speech, which determines his positive or negative judgement.

Learning is accomplished and useful when the transferring of information is realized:

External Moment: *Transfer* to the outside

Internal Moment: *Self-transfer* to the inside

Internal Moment: *Transfer* to the outside

Information should not be kept either by the addresser, or by the addressee, but it should be transferred by the addressee who becomes the addresser in his act of transferring the information itself.

II. Observations on learning

Audio-visual information from the external world is received, elaborated, and memorised in relation to the attention given to it.

Attention is determined by personal interest and willingness, likes and needs at school or work. Effectively it involves utilitarian selection resulting in a hierarchical order from among the *stimuli of information*. What happens when the receptor does not pay attention to the information, which comes from the external world because he is not interested in it?

Let us first observe learning in a context which is not educational. When somebody who loves music hears a song by chance and he does not listen to it intentionally to remember its words or notes, will he ever be able to remember them? In effect, he can remember more and more each time he comes across it, specifically: (a) the word order, that is, the word before or after another one; (b) the mind association among the words, that is, the word which recalls another word or a whole sequence of words; (c) the connection of the words with the melody.

Does it happen that somebody remembers what he does not need or want to remember at a particular moment?

It is possible that when somebody talks about A[2] he remembers F perhaps because A recalls F in his mind. Can it happen that somebody cannot remember what he needs and wants to remember at a particular moment? It

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[2] *A...B...F: different topics.*

is possible that when somebody talks about A he does not remember that he may connect A with B perhaps because he has never associated A with B in his mind, so that A may recall B automatically.

Maybe he does not know that B comes after A or he knows it but he does not know how to join together A to B into AB.

Automatic links may occur among words, images and sensations in general and for example: *when a historian at a conference talks about the historical figure J, he may remind a spectator of the battle X because the spectator has a picture representing it and the battle X may remind him of the weapons of the period Y because he has a sword that he can touch...*

Let us go back to the song mentioned above: what happens when the receptor as a singer in a chorus decides to listen to it deliberately to remember it?

The time of the memorisation of the song depends on the attention given to the song itself:

Major attention implies minor time to memorise;

Minor attention implies major time to memorise.

Let us now observe learning in a context which is educational. The counsellor as a teacher, during his session makes his academic speech concerning Counselling theory and practice; as he is a skilful counsellor, his exposition is very communicative because it represents the teacher's action, which needs the student's reaction to build up the interaction of the process of learning.

The student receiving audio-visual information summarises, schematises and takes down notes. The student, in elaborating audio-visual information, gives it the familiarity which allows him to learn it very well in a short time.

The student writes because in his writing, which involves auditory, visual and kinaesthetic skills, he translates the teacher's spoken language, or the written language of the book, into his own language.

The student translates an external information into an internal information. The external information may include sound (e.g. the teacher's voice) or may include sight (e.g. the printed page). The internal information is the student's personal, original expression. The student creates the way of disclosing his own personality to the external world by using his individual language and by choosing lexicon, syntax, and symbols which decode the teacher's code into the student's code.

The student's code is the means by which the implementation of the internalisation of external information is possible. The internalisation of information implies the translation of the unfamiliarity of audio-visual information into the familiarity of contents, handwriting and computer graphics.

The student, who is used to elaborating, writes a word with a similar meaning instead of another one which is difficult to remember or he reports it after asking the teacher for explanation; the skilled student understands that one concept is as the integration of another one and he puts them together by marking them with the same number or asterisk or symbol; he puts data referring to events, characters or argumentation in a connected series that he can understand.

The student becomes author of information by giving a new aspect to external information, by writing the teacher's utterance in his own way. The student becomes a source of self-information when he studies by using the new aspect that he has given to external information, that is, his elaboration.

The student, in being author and source of information, learns faster and better what he has to communicate as a learner during his scholastic career, as a worker during his professional career, and as a performer throughout his life.

Let us consider external information that is *visual information*. What does the student remember better, the page of the book or the same page translated by himself into his precis? The student used to elaborating may remember, for example, that: his lines of writing fill just the half of a page; he has written in block capitals with red ink the titles of the different topics so that he cannot mix up the topics; he has numbered the different parts for each topic to remember the different points which he has to communicate to the teacher during his oral or written task.

The student uses his notes as visual references where the graphic signs have a precise semantic value. The student's visual memory can recognise what is familiar to it such as the student's handwriting as the manifestation of his personal elaboration; visual memory cannot recognise what it is unfamiliar to it such as the types used in the printing of the student's book because they are not the manifestation of his personal elaboration.

Let us now consider external information that is *auditory information*.

During the lesson, the student takes notes from the teacher's voice. What happens if the student listens to his own voice rather than to the teacher's voice? Is it possible to deduce, by observing the process of learning, that the student's auditory memory may recognise the familiarity of the student's voice as his physical sound expression, as the student's *extension?*

The student who is the actor and author of information seems to recall easier, when asked for reiteration, what he himself reads, says and writes, by acting as a performer able to use all of his visual, auditory and kinaesthetic skills and strategies.

The student, as the successful communicative performer, exploits his visual potentiality when he is able to

mentally recall and to externally communicate what sight involves, such as colours, images, graphs, writings, drawings. The student exploits his auditory potentiality when he is able to mentally recall and to externally communicate what involves his hearing, such as sounds, speeches, utterances, background music, noise, silence. The student exploits his kinaesthetic potentiality when he is able to use movement to mentally recall and externally communicate, whereas according to a particular method of teaching and learning called Total Physical Response (TPS) the physical action while learning may act as a *stimulus* to recall learning itself (Asher, J. 1966, 1977 - Asher, J. Price, B.S. 1967).

From the observations on learning comes the concept of learning as a complex process which involves mind and any of the five powers of the body: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

The student who revises his lesson walking in the garden may remember the blue sky, his neighbour's voice, the smell of the flowers, the taste of his tea and the act of walking itself. The student in remembering all of this information may often recall his learning or some parts of it connected to the perception of his senses and his motion, and usually the development of learning as related to his different moods and gestures at different moments.

III. Counselling

Counselling as a word suggests help and when there is a person giving help there is another person asking for help.

Counselling is a bilateral process focused unilaterally on the client; the process involves two sides, that is, the counsellor and the counsellee, who meet to arrive at an agreement, passing through developing stages regarding the evolution of their relationship.

A relationship implies communication as an essential condition of its existence: the counsellor has to transfer his message to the counsellee, and the counsellee has to transfer his message to the counsellor in order to build up the dialogue of Counselling which includes the two participants.

A message may have its origins both in man's mind and heart, as a vehicle to express his thoughts or feelings by using words, notes, colours and even gestures, or a particular posture.

Man's physical expression as a manifestation of his insight may be interpreted in a positive or negative way according to different situations: a nod may show approval or agreement when the person is looking at his interlocutor; on the contrary, a nod may show a desire for flight when the person keeps his head down without looking at his interlocutor.

Counselling is one person giving help, assistance and support to another one who has a problem or is in some way in need.

Counselling as a humanistic technique focuses on the client as a whole person including his affective realm, that

is, emotions and feelings as well as his reports, deeds, verbal and non-verbal language.

Counselling process is based on communication and the Rogerian[3], La Forge, suggests that *communication is more than just a message being transmitted from a sender to a receiver* and that the counsellor and the client are at the same time *both subjects, as senders, and objects, as receivers, of their own messages because in a Counselling relationship communication is exchange and interaction* (La Forge, P.G. 1983).

The counsellor's main behavioural skills are a deep knowledge of human behaviour and the power of communication which means not only to be able to transmit and receive a message, but also to elicit it from the context, that is, to infer it from the psychological signs showing the evidence of the client's inner moods.

The starting point of the connection which does exist between the counsellor and the client is represented by their first meeting, in which both of them turn from two strangers into the active subjects of a human relationship with the common purpose of solving the client's problems in order to improve his life, which is at a turning point, implying a choice.

The first meeting is very important because it is the foundation of the whole process which is not static but dynamic from the beginning to the end, where it is necessary to put together all that the two subjects of the process itself learn throughout the different stages of evolution.

Counsellor-client interaction changes in its very nature from dependent into independent. It is possible to imagine the *Counselling Process* like a story-telling involving life-like characters who live different periods. The first period or introduction is when the characters start knowing each

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[3] *Rogerian: from Rogers* (Rogers C.R., 1951).

other; the second period or plot is when the characters start interacting; the third phase or *climax* is when the characters live *happily ever after* in their reaching an agreement, a contract concerning the client's welfare.

The contract is the last stage of the *Counselling Process*, whereas the negotiation between the two parts, to compromise for the best solution, is carried on during the previous stages.

In fact, the client's right choice often implies a compromise in which the client himself gains and loses something at the same time: the client has to lose or abandon his negative behaviour or habits, causing his crisis, to gain his better condition of life.

The counsellor and the client, as the two parts involved in the *Counselling Process*, are complementary between them in the sense that each part needs the other part and each part with its functions makes the other one complete; the two parts play two different roles as two different actors joined by a common goal in the movie of life.

The counsellor needs to nurture the client, whereas the client needs to be healed by the counsellor; the counsellor as a helper needs to give support whereas the client asks for it; the counsellor in his autonomy of life turns the client from a non-autonomous person into an autonomous person able to go ahead in life and make his own choice (Counselling Theory and Skills Courses 2001 – Counselling Services – University of Malta).

The client has to change his behaviour, beliefs and level of emotional distress to improve his life, in being able to think and act as a person who achieves what he is trying to achieve. The counsellor's first goal is to empower the client to feel the ability to do or act in the right way to gain the awareness of his own potentiality in his real context, the awareness of all that he is capable of achieving, to transform his desires into reality.

The counsellor's second goal is to reduce the client's emotional stress, anxiety and uncertainty, due to the decision itself to come to Counselling, by giving the client the basic understanding of the Counselling process, of how it works and of how it can be helpful to the client to be a participant in it. The counsellor starts helping the client to feel comfortable by showing his respect, high opinion and regard for him, by using the skill of active listening and disclosing a positive feeling in words and gestures as signs of acceptance.

The counsellor's third goal is to help the client to grow as a person to become mature and ready to use his mental faculties to organize and succeed in dealing with troubles.

Counselling implies a shared process with a shared responsibility but with a unique goal: leading to the client's change. Furthermore, Counselling, as essential conditions of its working, is characterized by particular features in both the counsellor's and the client's behaviour.

The counsellor should try to be impartial and committed without judgement, without showing assent or dissent, whereas the client should be flexible and easily adapting himself to new conditions or decisions. The counsellor should not influence the client by transferring his own way of thinking and acting, or in imposing his values on the client and in pointing out what the client must choose according to the counsellor's personal opinion.

The counsellor should give different options and explain to the client advantages and disadvantages for each option; the counsellor should wait for the client's possible reactions to examine them; the counsellor should give the client the tools to explore his thoughts and feelings and understand them in order to act in the right way.

The positive result or failure of Counselling depends on *empathy* which is the collaboration, interaction, dialogue and psychological contact between the two sides;

the counsellor's empathy is the great skill and power of perceiving and sharing the client's feelings and moods, likes, dislikes and needs, and of being able to *see from the client's point of view.*

The counsellor, in helping the client to make decisions and take actions, helps him to pass from dependence to independence, as a movement towards the client's gradual detachment from the counsellor, a process which makes the client able to see and develop unused or underused skills or to "catch" the right chance around him.

The counsellor adjusts his intervention to the client's peculiar case and reaction by using different skills and hints according to different moments and situations and by evaluating the client's response.

The counsellor may clarify in restating a sentence in a simple way, or by asking the client for story – telling, clarification, further explanation or information; the counsellor may summarize, by putting together all the elements of the situation as a whole, to give the client a complete, objective view of the situation not influenced by personal emotions.

The counsellor and the counsellee work together because counselling work is the activity of an association which wants to make life better.

IV. Counselling in learning as a lifelong process

Counselling in learning, as counselling "The mental hypertext", that is, an effective method of learning, is based on Rogerian Counselling and on its assumptions that the goal of the Counselling process like the goal of the learning process leads to the individual's autonomy and independence in life (Rogers, C.R. 1951).

The individual as a learner is a member of a community, his fellow learners and the knower, and he learns and communicates his learning through interacting with the members of a society which evolves in scientific and economic progress, and which discloses an increasing demand for selection.

Throughout his life man is forced to change according to changeable situations, to adjust himself to new conditions by gaining new knowledge.

Lifelong learning engages the whole person in his lifetime, including his emotions and feelings as well as his linguistic knowledge and his behavioural skills. Interaction through communication may be symmetrical, between equals, learner-learner or knower-knower, and asymmetrical between unequals, learner-knower (Munby, J. 1978).

Learner-learner interaction changes in the direction of increasing intimacy and trust whereas learner-knower interaction like client-counsellor interaction changes its nature from dependent to independent.

Learning is not an individual accomplishment but a social one, requiring communication which does not involve just the unidirectional transfer of information but the interactive pattern between the sender's action and the recipient's feedback reaction (La Forge, P.G. 1983).

Counselling in learning may be a very difficult task whereas the teacher, as the knower or the counsellor, may build up a method of learning together with the student, the learner or the client by which they may learn, interact and communicate in a successful way.

Counselling in learning is based on a group of ideas concerning the psychological requirements for successful learning that are collected by the Rogerian Curran, under the acronym SARD (Curran, C.A. 1976).

S stands for Security: unless learners feel secure they will find it difficult to enter into a successful learning experience.

A stands for Attention and Aggression: a loss of attention is an indication of the learner's lack of involvement in learning; aggression is a demonstration using the new knowledge as a tool for self-assertion.

R stands for Retention and Reflection: when the person is deeply involved in the learning process what is retained is internalised and becomes a part of the learner's new *persona*; reflection is a consciously identified period of silence, within the framework of the lesson at school or the student's homework, for the student to focus on his learning forces to assess his present stage of development and to re-evaluate future goals (La Forge, P.G. 1983).

D stands for Discrimination: the learner should choose among different things and see how one thing relates to another (in Richards, J.C.-Rodgers, T.S. 1999, pp. 117-118).

Counselling in learning advocates a holistic approach to learning since true human learning is both cognitive and affective, as it is *whole-person learning*.

Such learning takes place in a communicative situation where the sender and the receiver of verbal and non-verbal information are involved in an interaction, in *which both experience their own wholeness* (Curran, C.A. 1972).

A method of learning as a possible orientation in learning may be useful as a guide to help the learner to face daily difficulties in all careers which require the **performance of communication** as the act of expressing the learner's personality and wholeness and experiencing the other's personality and wholeness.

The successful lifelong learner and performer should know the method of his learning, self-training and self-retraining to continually prove his competence by his performance throughout his life.

Counselling in learning means giving help, assistance and support by suggesting some techniques of approach to learning.

The counselling-client relationship, like the knower-learner relationship, is characterised by an interaction which is initially dependent and then changes from dependence to independence.

Curran, a specialist in Counselling and a Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago, applies Psychological Counselling techniques to learning. Curran's application derives its primary insights from Rogerian Counselling which consists of one individual, the counsellor *assuming insofar the internal frame of reference of the client, perceiving the world as that person sees it and communicating something of this emphatic understanding* (Rogers, C.R. 1951): the teacher should analyse the student's needs and moods and adjust his intervention to them.

Counselling in learning draws on the Counselling metaphor to redefine the roles of the teacher as a counsellor, and of the student as a client, in the learning process.

Counselling in learning is based on a conception of the learning process which reminds one of the ontogenetic development of the child. The relationship between the counsellor and the client is like the relationship between the parent and his child. The parent helps the child to develop into an adult who organizes and controls his life.

In the first "birth" stage, feelings of security are established; in the second, as the learner's abilities improve, the learner as a child begins to achieve a measure of independence from the parent. By the third, the learner "speaks independently" and may need to assert his identity, often rejecting unasked-for advice. The fourth stage sees the learner as secure enough to take criticism, and by the last stage, the learner merely works upon improving style and knowledge of linguistic appropriateness. By the end of the process, the child has become an adult able to face life: the learner knows everything the teacher does and how to face texts and listening so he is independent and can become knower for a new learner (Curran, C.A. 1972 in Richards J.C. and Rodgers, T.S. 1999, pp. 117-118).

The goal of Counselling in learning is the achievement of the individual's independence and the empowerment of his communicativeness which make him a better performer.

V. Suggestopedia[4]

Counselling in learning is, in this case, talking about a particular method of learning which is a variation of *Suggestopedia*, the procedure developed by the Bulgarian Psychiatrist-Educator Georgi Lozanov.

Suggestopedia derives from *Suggestology* which Lozaov describes as a science concerned with the systemic study of the non-rational and non-conscious influences that human beings are constantly responding to; *Suggestopedia* tries to harness these influences and redirect them so as to optimise learning (Stevick, E. W. 1976).

Lozanov acknowledges ties in tradition to Yoga and Soviet Psychology; from Raja-Yoga, Lozanov has borrowed and modified techniques for altering states of consciousness and concentration and the use of rhythmic breathing. From Soviet Psychology Lozanov has taken the notion that all students can be taught a given subject matter at the same level of skills.

Suggestopedia is based on the assumption that attentiveness may be manipulated to optimise learning and recall. Memorisation in learning by the Suggestopedic method seems to be accelerated twenty-five times over that in learning by using conventional methods.

Lozanov believes most learning takes place in a relaxed but focused state and he recommends home study or recordings of "whole meaningful texts" as acts of communication (Lozanov, G. 1972).

[4] In Richards, J.C.-Rodgers, T.S. 1999, pp. 142-153.

Suggestion is at the heart of *Suggestopedia* and it means that the learner learns not only *consciously* from the effect of direct instruction, but also *unconsciously* from environmental suggestions. The kind of activities that are more original to *Suggestopedia* are the *listening activities* often with a musical background: the students first look at and discuss a new text with the teacher, then they listen to the teacher's voice or to an audio cassette while they relax comfortably, often in reclining chairs arranged in a circle, and breathe deeply to activate *their unconscious learning system*.

According to Lozanov, the mental state of the learners is critical to success and they must immerse themselves in the procedures of the method and maintain a pseudo-passive state, in which the material rolls over and through them.

Materials consist of direct support materials, primarily **text** and **tape** and a particular technique known as the *Séance* or *Concert Session* in which the teacher listens to the music coming from a tape-recorder and begins to read or recite the new text, his voice modulated in harmony with the musical phrases, **while the students first follow the text in their text- books and then close their textbooks and listen to the teacher's reading.** They are not told to do any homework on the lesson, except for reading it once before going to bed and again before getting up in the morning (Lozanov, G. 1978).

VI. The mental hypertext[5]

Presentation of the method of learning

Counselling in the method of learning means helping the performer to manage his needs of lifelong communication by using his visual, auditory and kinaesthetic potential. In this essay the method of learning is learner-centred and it concerns the creation of a **mental hypertext** which does not imply the provenance of audio-visual information from an external source but from the learner himself, who learns through a process of self-training, self-assessment and self-evaluation, by monitoring his learning continually.

The method of learning implies the simulation of the elimination of the exteriority of audio-visual information and together with it the elimination of the difficulty in internalising exterior information.

During the simulation the learner's voice and schemas substitute the teacher's voice and the type-face of the book; the simulation may become *computer-assisted learning* by which the student interacts with his mental hypertext.

The learner becomes the protagonist of learning as the source, receiver, author and sender of information; the learner becomes his own simulated teacher who writes and talks to himself.

The students and the teachers to whom the method of learning is addressed represent learners and knowers, even peers as knowers, in every learning context in life.

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[5] In d'Epiro Alessandra, 1999.

The adoption of the method which makes it effective presumes the gradual education of the student to correct reading, to the recording of his own voice, to the schematisation of his own voice, to the recording of his own exposition and to its improvement on tape, disk or file. Such education includes the participation of the teacher as a mediator between the student and the text, and as a facilitator who leads to the student's independence. The teacher's professionalism guides the student to the approach, to the vocabulary and contents of the subject-matter, to the assessment of correct individual elaboration, to the identification and localisation of gaps in the student's exposition, to the understanding of the cause of the student's emotional stress. The teacher functions as a helper who intervenes in order to lessen the doubts and imperfections of the student's speech.

The teacher's professionalism evaluates from time to time the moods and intensity of his intervention which is always related to the student's aptitude, intellectual and behavioural qualities, creativeness, motivation, willingness and culture.

All that the method of learning illustrates is obviously neither rigorous nor dogmatic but it is strictly connected to the student's ability, skills, needs and liberty of expressing himself, in a conversation which, even regarding an examination, includes a number of variations.

The way of presenting the method of learning is directed to simplification and so the interaction and dialogue between the teacher and the student is split into *question-answer* situations. The whole discipline is broken up into partial segments, which are compared with each other by using hypertext links. Obviously the segmentation is used just to give separate examples of techniques of learning and to explain them clearly. The process of learning itself is subdivided into a sequence of phases: the or-

ganisation of the schema, the symbology adopted, and the listening contexts and times are just examples.

The method of learning emphasises the *exposure to learning* by the learner's self-training of his *receptive skills*, that is, reading and listening, and of his *productive skills*, that is, writing and speaking.

The student, who wishes to experiment with the method of learning should use a walkman or any micro, mobile audio/video/CD/recorder or a microcomputer; the student should also order the cassettes, micro-cassettes, diskettes, CDs or files by putting a label or inscription with the subject-matter, the progressive number, the pages of the book which are recorded.

The number of the cassettes, microcassettes, diskettes, CDs or files depends on the quality and time of recording and speaking. The method of learning is just a model or a way of learning, which is articulated in eleven phases encompassing particular moments of self-training and self-assessment and involving all the receptive and productive skills.

The student may use the phases of the method according to his likes and needs. He may proceed from one phase to another or he may leave out intermediate phases. He may use the phases or the parts of phases that he wants, he may verify their simple, practical execution.

Every method of learning is made valid by the learner if, by his potential and the teacher's guide, he can prove to others his learning at speaking or writing, that is, at communicating it.

This method of learning has been experimented by students of different ages, cultural level, and different disciplines to be learned.

The Method of Learning

PHASE I

The student should read carefully the text to be studied so that he can understand even the most difficult parts of it; the student should understand the contents of his readings.

PHASE II

The student should record, by using his voice, the whole text, or the most important or difficult parts of it. The student reads aloud as if others were listening to him, because he will confer before others. The student, by recording his own voice, faces his first impact on the external world, represented by the tape, video-camera, CD recorder or micro PC.

The student distributes his reading "R" in different recordings progressively ordered and labelled with the name of the subject-matter, the ordinal number, the pages of the book: R- Family Law, 1-70.

The student should record in a way that he will understand himself during the listening phase; he should observe punctuation and he should not read fast or misunderstand the words; if it happens he will correct himself. Otherwise, he will not understand himself when he listens to himself.

PHASE III

The student, by using a mobile cassette/CD player or microcomputer may choose different contexts for his first

listening: his home, the garden, the car, the gym, the sea, the mountains, while walking, while jogging, while cooking, before going to bed and before getting up in the morning.

The student may study wherever and whenever he wants without being obliged to sit down at his desk to be in contact with the subject matter. This phase requires a *minimum* degree of attention, which allows the mind segmentation of the topics and the memorisation of the logical sequence of the topics.

The student should recall and repeat aloud the titles of the topics, the border-lines of the topics and their systematic order:

Discipline:	History of Roman Law
Title of Topic I:	<u>Monarchic Constitution</u>
Beginning: 754 A.C	*Romolo* First *Rex*
Ending: 510 (509) A.C	*Traquinio il Superbo* Last *Rex*
Title of Topic II:	<u>Republican Constitution</u>
Beginning: 510 (509) A.C	*Res Publica*
Ending: 27 A.C	*Augusto's Principality*

PHASE IV

The student should listen to his voice for the second time. This phase requires a *medium* degree of attention to recall the general contents of each cassette, micro-cassette or file just after listening to it. The contents of a topic are its main points whereas the elements of a topic are its smaller points or features or details. The student should recall and repeat aloud all that he can remember and if he has carefully planned out the previous phase he already knows the titles of the topics, the borderlines between one topic and another and the sequence of the topics.

The student may imagine each topic as if it were an empty box on which there is a label displaying its contents: the student has the label, that is the title of the topic, but he should fill up the box with all that he can recall about each label. He should take care to place his memories in the box in the learned sequence by not mixing up the memories belonging to different boxes.

The student should not get muddled up or mistake the contents belonging to different topics because during his communicative speech, he should not shift from the contents of a topic to the contents of another one without logical connection.

PHASE V

The student should listen to his voice for the third time. This phase requires a *maximum* degree of attention to carry on a *schema* as a mind-map from each tape or file.

The schema is an organised way of taking notes even if it is not the teacher who communicates to the student but it is the student who communicates to himself. The student does not listen to his teacher's voice but to his own voice and he does not take notes from the teacher's voice but from his own voice. The student elaborates the subject-matter, grasping, selecting and ordering in his mind the main points as the basis to build up his whole speech. The student should write all that he thinks is useful to recall such as: the keywords, or meaningful words, that, as tracks on a path, may allow the student to rebuild a whole concept; the symbology used to represent ideas: initials, abbreviations, signs, numbers, letters, asterisks, arrows, graphs, acrostics, acronyms.

The student, by listening to his voice and using just one colour of ink, should draw a readable schema of the first topic. When the student finishes the first topic he

should stop listening and he should make the internal connections or links of the topic. When the student finishes all the schemas of all the topics with their internal connections, he should connect different topics: he should make the external connections or links among the topics. Then the student should try to copy out his first draft to vary, enrich, cut it or point out its elements.

The student should make the personalisation of his schema and he may use:

1. Red ink to write or underline the title of the topic;
2. Black ink to write or underline the contents of the topic and block capitals to mark each content;
3. Blue ink to write or underline the elements of each content and an ordinal number to mark each element;
4. Green ink to write or underline the links within the same topic by putting together the letters of the contents which have similarities or differences:
   A = B (A is similar to B)
   A ≠ B (A is different from B);
5. Green ink to write or underline the links among the contents of different topics:
   II A = III B (the content A of the topic II is similar to the content B of the topic III)
   II A ≠ III B (the content A of the topic II is different from the content B of the topic III).

Example of a Schema

Discipline:	Italian Constitutional Law
Topic X:	Governative Regulations
Content A:	Regulations of Execution
Elements:	Integration of Laws
	Explication of Laws
Content B:	Regulations of Integration
Elements:	Innovation of Laws

Links:
Contents A/B: the topic is composed of the contents A and B;
A ≠ B: the content A is different from the content B.

A and B may become hypertext links when the student scans and stores his schema in different colours in order to interact with its data.

The time of the realisation of the first draft depends on different variables such as the complexity of the text, the student's culture, and the teacher's intervention.

First hyphotesis:

1. Absence of difficulty of comprehension in listening because of non-technical words: the student may understand the recording because the language is easy or because he may have received the teacher's necessary explanation;
2. Presence of the student's background on the topic: the student who has to study the comparative degrees in English may already know how many degrees of comparison exist and what they are;
3. Presence of the student's ability to translate his voice into the draft and to write fast: the student may immediately grasp the keywords and put them in order.

In this hypothesis, the time of the realisation of the first draft is more or less as long as the recording time because the student stops the recorder just to be able to write neatly.

Second hypothesis:

1. Presence of difficulty of comprehension in listening because of difficult texts and the student who does not ask the teacher for explanation;
2. Absence of the student's background on the topic or presence of *patchy* knowledge. The student who has to study the comparative degrees in English does not know how many degrees of comparison exist and what they are;
3. Absence of the student's ability to translate his voice into the draft and to write fast. The student cannot draw the draft because he is not used to doing it and nobody has ever explained how to draw it to him.

In this hypothesis the time of the realisation of the first draft is obviously longer than the recording time because the student re-listens each time he cannot comprehend in order to draft.

PHASE VI

The student should listen to his voice for the fourth time. The student should reiterate while following his schema until he becomes independent from the recording by using his receptive skills, listening and reading: the student listens to his voice while reading his schema on the sheet of paper or on the computer screen.

The student should try to gradually rebuild the whole speech, topic by topic, without the recording; the student listens to a part of his recording while reading the schema, then he stops listening and, reading again the schema, he tries to recall what he has just listened to.

The time of memorisation, and so of the independence from the schema, as a visual support, depends on the student's mnemonic skills and also on his motivation, atten-

tion, expectations and goals: he can recall the whole at a
time or he needs to listen more than once before recalling.

PHASE VII

The student should reiterate until he gains indepen-
dence from the scheme so that he can recall without his
notebook or computer. When the student is independent,
he can master the matter in his remarkable ability to *re-
build the speech,* in recalling topics, contents and elements
and in his ability, as a consequence of the previous one, to
create the links among topics, contents and elements, that
is, the *student's creation of a mental hypertext.*

This phase concludes the self-training to the student's
communicative independence whereas the following
phase starts the self-training to the student's communica-
tive empowerment.

PHASE VIII

The student should recall and eventually correct his
self-exposition. First, the student should recall and record
his exposition following his mind-map with the topic as
the focus, the contents as the branches and the elements
as the sub-branches. Then the student should listen to his
exposition to evaluate his learning, to understand his
communicative strength and weakness and to empower
his communicative skills.

When learning is just receptive without being produc-
tive it causes a lot of problems in the student's career.

The student may have the consciousness of the knowl-
edge of the topic but he does not know how to communi-
cate it or he does not want to communicate it because he
is afraid of making mistakes.

If the student does not make himself able and sure to communicate to others his internal understanding he risks negative results which do not reflect his real competence; the student may get bad marks because he cannot prove his learning during his performance. If the student's competence deserves approval or praise the student's performance must gain them. The student who listens to his own-recorded speech may find out its imperfections to correct them on the tape or file, by recording the right version.

The imperfections of the student's speech may regard: the excessive rise and fall of intonation; the pause that may be too short or too long or the lack of the pause; the repetitive vocabulary and expressions; the use of tortuous or improper language; grammar gaps; the lack of logical order; the inability to associate and compare the clues of the speech to point out similarities and differences; the emphasis on one aspect and the disregard for another; the inability to distinguish between the main points and the details, and so on.

The student should build up his speech in a simple and correct way preferably by using the structure S V O (subject-verb-object) and by inserting anecdotes to attract the listener's attention.

The student may improve his exposition little by little by re-recording its worst parts to correct errors and to fill up gaps to reach the desired or necessary level of speaking: the student corrects the recording to correct himself. The technique gets the student's self-assessment as self - evaluation and self - confrontation, and the student's judgement of his weak points; the student listens to himself as if others were listening to him and, through his constructive criticism, he notices his faults and eliminates them in advance, before his scholastic performance.

The student should listen to his speech as if it were another person's speech and should try to consider his

speech from an objective point of view: does the student understand himself while speaking? If he can understand himself he is a good speaker but if he cannot understand himself certainly he should not expect to be understood by others!

The student, by adopting the procedure, reaches the awareness of his own competence to turn it into his performance and he develops the critical thought to understand his and others' values and faults, strength and weakness; in doing so he contributes to the growth of his personal opinion as an essential part of his personality.

PHASE IX

The student should communicate his learning by using the productive skills that he trained in: writing and speaking.

The student, who has the awareness of his competence and performance, may gain self-confidence, may win his fears of making mistakes, because he learnt how to correct them, or may win his fears of not being able to speak, which may be due to emotional stress, because he has already spoken.

The student who has to do a written or oral examination has just to replay his performance by writing his speech or talking about it. Obviously, his speech is very familiar to him because he built it up as the author and actor of the speech itself.

The student already knows his speech and his performance as clear, logical, correct, and exhaustive because he is self-trained to talk and to better his talking. The speech about the topic is the student's speech and creation and so he can recall the sequence and the extension of topics, contents and elements and their interconnections.

The self-trained and self-assessed student acquires the automatic *mind-association and separation* which allow him to select and extract the right answer to the teacher's question:

If the teacher asks A: the student will answer A;

If the teacher asks B: the student will answer B;

If the teacher asks AB: the student will answer AB.

PHASE X

If the student needs his speech again in his life he may listen to his recording and choose different contexts: his home, the garden, the car, the gym, the seaside, the mountains, while walking, while jogging, while cooking, before going to bed and before getting up in the morning. The student may study whenever and wherever he wants without being obliged to sit down at his desk to be in contact with the subject-matter.

The graduate student who has to study to pass a competitive examination regarding a topic of an examination he has already done at the University, may re-listen to his speech by up-dating it with integration, elimination or variation.

The student does not need to study all over again all the books, but he may recall his old speech in his mind.

Schema of the phases of the method

Phase I: Reading to comprehend

Phase II: Reading to record

Phase III: First listening: recalling the topics and their sequence

Phase IV: Second listening: recalling general contents

Phase V: Third listening: schema

Phase VI: Recalling the whole speech without listening. Independence from the audiotape or file

Phase VII: Recalling the whole speech without reading. Independence from the schema

Phase VIII: Self-exposition: monitoring and bettering the speech

Phase IX: Exposition: communication

Phase X: Re-listening to re-use.

VII. Conclusions

Every method of learning may be analysed in terms of **approach, design** and **procedure**: approach refers to theoretical assumptions about the nature of learning that serve as the source of practices and principles; design is the level of the objectives of the methods, the roles of knowers, learners and instructional materials; procedure encompasses the techniques and behaviour (Richards, J.C. & Rodgers, T.S. 1999)

This "mental hypertext" concerns the **approach** of learning as communication; the **design** to develop the student's visual, auditory and kinaesthetic potential, by his self-training, self-monitoring, self-feedback, self-assessment and self-evaluation both in the receptive and productive skills; the **procedure** focused on the reading, listening, writing and speaking activities of the phases.

The techniques of the phases are useful to:

1. The increase of the contact between the learner and his learning task in different learning contexts, so that he can acquire the familiarity of information;

2. The fast memorisation of the learner's learning task by his recognition of the familiarity of his audio-visual information;

3. The planning of the learner's learning time by his choosing a specific degree of attention;

4. The training in reporting before an audience, by crossing obstacles, overcoming fears or fixed habits and earning self-confidence and self-esteem;

5. The avoidance of the learner's re-studying, by his re-calling information;

According to the three stages of Egan's Counselling Model (Egan, G. 1998) the method of Counselling in learning in the "mental hypertext" presents an evolution of the relationship between the knower and the learner working together through past, present and future in a common confidential effort. The past concerns the analysis of the learner's power and weak points and his previous success or failure.

The learner's portrait is painted by the different colours chosen by the knower's and the learner's personalities by using the Counsellor's active listening and the client's story-telling.

The learner may give a description of himself, about the elements which compound his world such as friends, relatives, about his tastes, or what he likes or dislikes.

The analysis of the problem derives from a cooperation between the knower and the learner in which the knower asks the learner to give a description of the problem and its reasons as his personal version of the situation: his failure at an oral test because of his emotivity.

The learner's awareness of the problem and its cause are the first steps to solve the problem itself, to control its frequency and to avoid it from happening in the future.

The learner's understanding of the past gives him the awareness of his potential, resources and limits in the present. The knowledge of the present, as a theoretical survey of the learner's capability, pushes him into action by empowering him to face learning problems in the future.

The knower may give different options of learning as possible solutions; their aim is to elicit the student's reaction and mediate the best solution in a balance of costs and benefits.

The knower may show the future deriving from seeing the other side of the problem such as difficulties in learning as an opportunity to *learn a method of learning* which may be useful in life; the knower tries to arouse and con-

quer the learner's will-power by underlining his resources and talking productively about his past scholastic success rather than about his present failure.

The learner's goal arises from the examination of his own personality and of what the origin of the unhappiness which troubles him is.

The knower should try to establish, by testing the learner through the use of oral and written tasks, if the learner's goal to become brilliant is proportional to his potential, in order to avoid disappointment and to disclose to him the possibility of reaching the goal in a shorter or longer time and with different strategies.

The counsellor of learning has to take care of a human being, *the learner of independence expressing weakness and longing for certainty.*

Moreover the counsellor of learning should have a system of firm moral principles, besides his professionalism, to be honest and genuine in his work; the counsellor should be sensitive and tentative in his awareness of the client's feelings which may be easily hurt or offended with a negative reflection on his own life; the counsellor should try to understand the client by using his professionalism and by testing, step by step, the effect of his therapy on the learner-client in a bilateral relationship in which the most important things are:

1. The great respect, without social, economical, religious prejudice, for human beings in general, with their strengths and weaknesses, values and faults.
2. The great respect for the client's freedom or personal liberty expressed by the counsellor's eliciting without imposing, his accepting instead of refusing the learner-client's behaviour.

The counsellor of learning as an elicitor of man's independence acts successfully if he can help the *lifelong*

learner to understand and use his power of communication to establish an interaction between the learner and the world by the learner's giving to it and receiving from it the *sense of his own conscious wholeness* (Curran, C.A. 1972).

The counsellor of learning possesses, as a feature of his peculiar work, the humble state of mind of submitting his professionalism to man's value.

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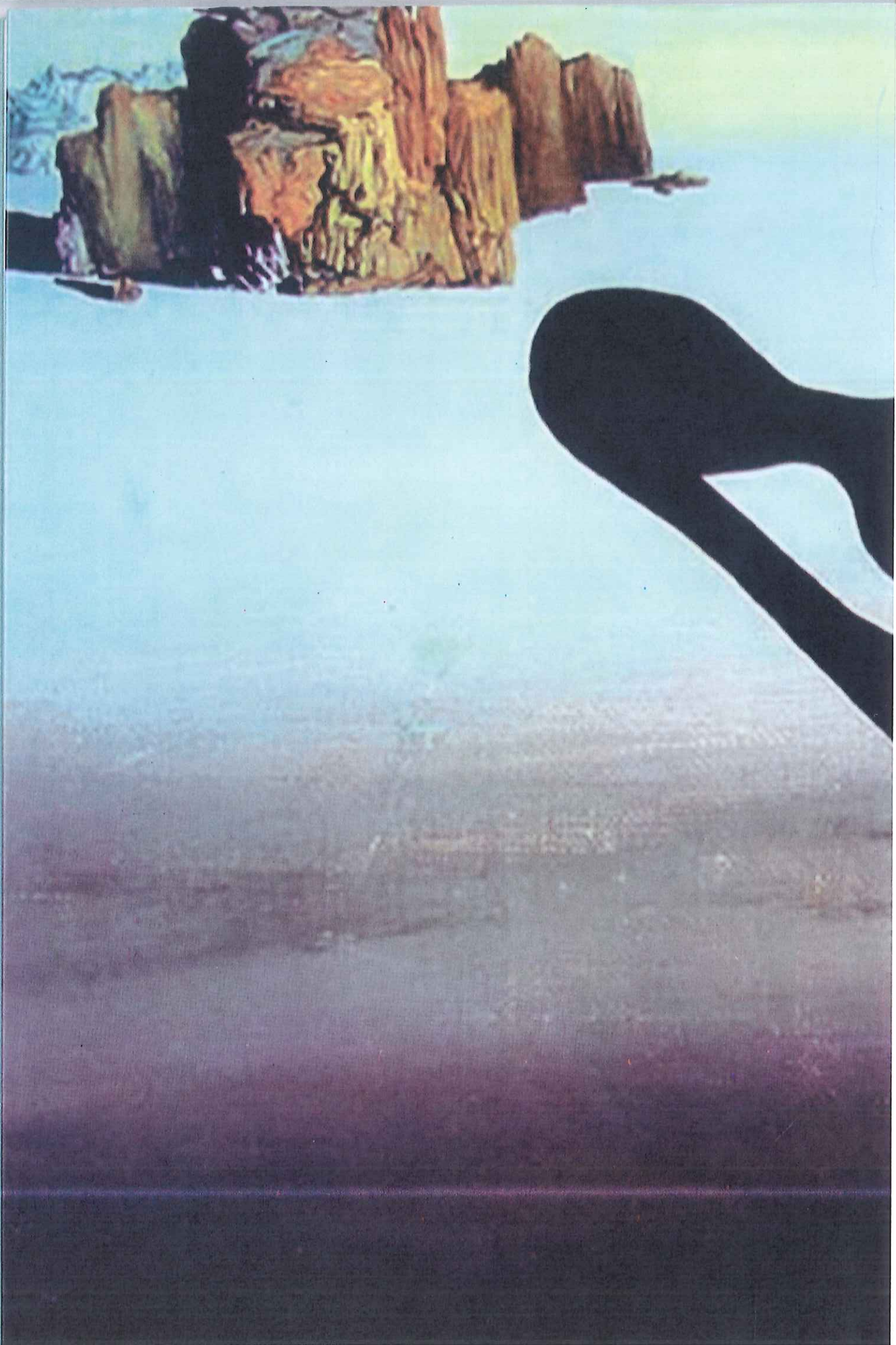
PERIFERIA

THE MENTAL HYPERTEXT

Alessandra d'Epiro

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COUNSELLING IN LEARNING AS A LIFELONG PROCESS

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