

Analysis on Applications of Mind Map in English Writing Teaching

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Abstract: *At the present stage, the teaching activities aim at promoting students' learning quality and creative accomplishments. This demands teachers to create more teaching activities to facilitate students' creative potential. As an efficient tool for thinking, mind map can achieve the visualization of thinking through presenting the hierarchy of concepts and the sequence of thinking. Naturally, it will be helpful to promote both students' creativity and memory. It also can arouse students' writing interest and cultivate students' logical thinking ability. Therefore, this paper is going to have a brief introduce in the problems existing in students' English writing. Furthermore, it will improve students' English writing ability by applying mind map during the writing teaching process. Last but not least, it can arouses students' critical thinking.*

Keywords: Mind map, English writing teaching.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing ability is an important index to embody the learner's language proficiency. Our country has made great progress in foreign language writing field during the past decades and it relies on the climax in the study of English writing teaching. In fact, writing, as one of English learning part, is one of the most vital skills. The utilization of language in educational institutions across all disciplines ought to comprehensively encompass the essential competencies that students must grasp and be able to execute in the realms of writing, reading, speaking, viewing, as well as visually representing information. Nevertheless, with the changes of population and the increasing needs for learning, there is a vital point to look more closely at teachers' use of writing inside the class and outside the class. In current English course, writing is a critical skill for the students' English learning.

Recently, the concept of incorporating Mind Map-based instruction in English writing classes has been introduced, fostering its advancement within the realm of English language teaching methodologies. This innovative approach aims to enhance students' learning experiences and facilitate the development of their linguistic skills. It is a tool that has the ability to present the words or ideas that are arranged radically around a central topic. It can vary difficult articles into simple and highly organized maps which are easier for students to remember. By the way, the thinking process can apply the Mind Map. It can structure the information and classify the ideas which can contribute a lot to writing task. Therefore, the research aims to study the characteristics of Mind Map and applies it to English writing class, thereby finding out the way to help students at intermediate level cultivate a good habit of thinking critically, further enlarge their writing knowledge by using the thinking tool--Mind Map.

1.2 Mind Map

Mind map, whose founder was Tony Buzan, was a simple and efficient kind of revolutionary thoughts tool for memory and proliferation of ideas. The factors of this tool are key words,

graphs, branches and colors. By means of drawings and words skill, it shows the relation between each theme by mutually subordinated and relevant hierarchical diagram, and then makes memory links to topic keywords, pictures and colors. What's more, to help students balance development between science and imagination by the law of memory, reading and thought, it makes the full use of the function of bilateral brain. So it opens the endless potential of human mind with great function. in actual, it is the way of expressing radiant thinking. Indeed, it is an inherent capability of the human mind. A mind map serves as a potent tool that facilitates thinking and learning processes. This remarkable graphic technique offers a universal key, unlocking the vast potential of human cognition (Buzan, 1993).

The mind map is by the ways of teaching and training a system developed by the famous scholar Anthony of Britain. And with the development and further, the mind map has gradually become one of the most influential training model in the world. Mind map training is based on mental and Chile's improvement. Furthermore, it harnesses the full potential of both the right and left hemispheres of the brain, seamlessly integrating words, logic, images, colors, and other elements into the entire thinking and memory process. Additionally, the utilization of the graphical model of the mind map not only captures the entirety of this process but also acts as a guide, fostering critical thinking and maximizing the cognitive capabilities of the human brain.

During the process of the mind map's construction, we have the ability to make full use of lines, color, graphics and other cortical functions to stimulate the brain, to carry out the whole brain thinking. Therefore, mind map is a way of presenting thought processes and results in an intuitive way. It is also an useful way to graphic thinking. It has many characters. These different features are combined to achieve simple and prominent. It also can help strengthen the brain image thinking, let the sides of the brain to maximize play, greatly improve the learners in intelligence and the use of skills. Thus, it helps strengthen the absorption of knowledge.

1.3 English Writing Teaching

In regard of English writing teaching, this part mainly

illustrates the definition of writing and approaches to writing teaching.

Writing, just as one of the most vital parts during the English teaching, which is a process of brain activity and a process of social interaction and serves as an important ways for outputting language and delivering communication as well as cultivating students' comprehensive ability to use English. Concurrently, writing serves as a powerful medium that showcases students' comprehensive abilities and presentation skills, given its nature as an output activity. It offers a platform for expressing thoughts, ideas, and understanding, thereby reflecting one's overall academic prowess.

According to Little wood, writing is a kind of written communication activity with a process of discovery, which helps people find out their ideas and their intentions. Thus the process of writing is a process of problem-solving, generative, recursive, collaborative, and developmental (Littlewood, 1981). Zema regards writing as a continuous thinking exploration process, which extends the original ideas first and then elaborates carefully to modify them continually (Zema, 1982). Widdowson claims that language conventions practice can't be seen as writing, but composing (Widdowson, 1983). Writing is an activity using for communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Studies on Mind Map Abroad

Numerous disciplines abroad, spanning business, education, science, and beyond, have embraced mind mapping as a valuable tool. Notably, its introduction into the realm of education has had a profoundly positive impact, particularly in fostering divergent thinking. As a result, many developed countries have incorporated mind mapping into their school curriculum reforms, recognizing it as an exemplary instrument for fostering creativity and critical thinking. Meanwhile, many foreign countries have leading superiority in the study of adopting mind map into classroom teaching. Combined with the Brain Friendly theory, Graves defined mind map as a successful learning strategy (Graves, 1978). A study carried out by Martin Eppler put forward many students that were guided through mind map in the constructive situation apparently performed much better than those taught in the traditional method (Martin Eppler, 2006). In the book *The Mind Map Book* written by Tony Buzan, the author knew that he was the first person combined the radiant thinking with note-taking together, which brought a reform storm in all kinds of field (Tony Buzan, 2004).

2.2 Studies on Mind Map at Home

The field of education has also embraced this concept. In fact, in the late 1990s, mind mapping made its debut in our country through the book titled "The Learning Revolution". Since then, numerous scholars have shown a keen interest in mind mapping. Many writing approaches have been studied and applied in English writing teaching. An even greater need exists for a direct and visual teaching approach to guide and instruct them in English writing. So mind map seems to be a good choice in view of students' mental characteristic. A study conducted by Cui Beibei has found that mind map could

be applied in information production, evaluation, organization, drafting, and modification in the overall process of writing by learners (Cui Beibei, 2012).

As a tool or medium, it contributes to completing these steps in each phrase. According to a research carried out by Yang Jing, she revealed that mind map had the function of summarizing and reflecting the isolated, scattered sentences and phrases, which gave learners an integrated and unbroken picture and structure of the composition (Yang Jing, 2013). Without doubt, mind map has been paid more and more attention by researchers and teachers. Because it is very favorable to organize thought and information, and can enhance the logical relationship between new information and former information, which facilitates English writing task. Therefore, teachers applied mind map as a teaching method and learning means in English writing teaching.

3. Analysis on Applications of Mind Map in English Writing Teaching

3.1 The Procedure of Applications of Mind Map in English Writing Teaching

This section delves into the intricacies of the teaching procedure, emphasizing the importance of constructing an integrated structure to ensure students comprehend and grasp knowledge systematically. By designing a cohesive and comprehensive teaching process, educators can facilitate a seamless learning journey that enables students to build a robust foundation of understanding.

In the first stage, the teacher leads-in mind map as a tool to classify the words and phrases present in class. For example, the teacher uses a picture of students' journal to lead-in mind map for her students. This is a proper way to lead-in for the students are familiar with the journal and some of them have already read it. Moreover, the teacher introduces the ways of making mind map after showing the journal. Next, when making a mind map, several colors of chalks and different forms of simple mind map are used by the teacher. This gives students visual aids, which can enhance their interesting in English class. Gradually, students can also draw a conclusion on the knowledge they have learned by using mind map.

If students only learn new knowledge rather than review the knowledge they have learned, they can't use the knowledge flexibly. Therefore, in the second stage, the teacher pays more attention to make linkages from "existing knowledge" to "new knowledge". For instance, when students have learned "Unit 3 computers", they know the words like television, telephone, washing machine and calculator. Next, the text comes to "Unit 4 Inventions". The teacher doesn't use much time to review the words in unit 3 but uses a mind map to combine the unit 3 (existing knowledge) and unit 4 (new knowledge) together.

According to the Mind Map, under the direction of the teacher, the students not only can speak some sentences about "inventions", but also can use the verbs properly. Through the period of association, students can connect the two classes and summarize them together and they become more active than before, because they often design their mind maps before or

after a new class.

In the third stage, in order to achieve better effects, the teacher follows the theory of (i+1), which is based on Vigotsky's concept of approximate development area. In this stage, as students gradually adapt to mind map, they can use it more flexible and skillful. At the same time, it allows students to adapt a certain degree of difficulty. Therefore, the teacher begins to involve mind map in class more naturally, and a sample class is presented as following: Unit 4 Save the trees, this unit mainly talks about the importance of trees and what can people do to save the trees. In period one, the teacher pays more attention to accumulate students' vocabulary and arouses their environmental awareness.

The teacher first uses the Amazon Rainforest to lead in, and the students are familiar with the noun, because they have learned it from geography class. They talked about the trees, the "natural oxygen bar" and the precious species, but most of them use Chinese to express their views. So the teacher translates their words and emphasizes the pronunciation of the new words. This is the period of input, during the time students take in many new words and expression about trees and environmental. In this unit, there is an article about "trees in our daily lives". After learned the article, the students are required to use mind map as a tool to organize the writing materials.

The teacher only provides the rough sketch of the mind map and the central theme like "The importance of trees". Next, the students will work in groups to add the branches and add subordinate nodes. The image of the tree serve as an impressive reminder for the students. They add their ideas on the branches of the tree and cooperate with their partners. Sometimes, they also discuss whether they should add ornaments on the tree. Then, the teacher will invite some volunteers come to the front and share their works respectively. In this condition, students are admitted to ask questions to the students in the front of the classroom. Finally, the teacher will work with the students to modify and improve the mind map.

In the last stage, it is the practical part of using mind map in writing teaching. In other words, this stage is for students to make their mind map become a composition, which is a test for their logical thinking ability, language competence and whether they have the ability of information-reading. Because the aim of using mind map in class is not for drawing but for cultivating students' ability of getting or collecting information through the tool.

At last, the teacher chooses some topics for the students to write compositions. Once they finished a composition, some of them will be invited to share their works and the students will discuss it and correct the inappropriate expression together. Each one has the opportunity to be involved in the class and nearly all of them can find pleasure in it.

3.2 The Significance of Applications of Mind Map on Students' English Writing Teaching

According to Ellis, the writer should not only deliver the information, but also need to make sure that the delivered

information is appropriate and correct (Ellis, 1994). But there is a large gap between the input and output of students. In other words, students input so much information but they can't output in writing. mind map can help writers construct knowledge in a systematic way through drawing maps, which plays a vital part in writing. The significance of mind map in writing can be illustrated in the following aspects.

First of all, mind map can bridge the gap between the new knowledge and old knowledge. Usually, students learn the new knowledge based on a great deal of well-organized prior knowledge. Brinkmann argues that mind map can make knowledge organized hierarchically in mind, which is helpful to the assimilation of knowledge (Brinkmann, 2003). And it can be used to learn about what students' prior knowledge is and provide a visual diagram of how information is organized when students draw their maps, which helps to construct the structure of the writing.

What's more, mind map can serve as the trigger, because it always starts with the central image and can represent our thinking process. mind map can stimulate writers to come up with more ideas related to the central topic. Also, mind map can help writers have a better understanding of the internal connections among all the information needed in writing, which is helpful to convey the general idea of writing.

Furthermore, with the help of mind map, students can recall the vocabulary of the related topics more easily in writing. Sometimes, students forget the vocabulary suddenly when writing, but mind map can note down and present the related vocabulary and even the sentence patterns. And the process of drawing mind maps can cultivate students' ability of organizing and processing information. What's more, mind mapping offers students invaluable tools for coherence, seamlessly integrating various cohesive devices and enhancing their frequency of usage. Consequently, this empirical research endeavors to delve into the potential of mind mapping as an effective teaching tool in junior high school English writing classes. The question of how and to what extent mind mapping can be appropriately integrated into this context merits thorough and meticulous investigation.

Lastly, writing is an iterative process of deep contemplation that builds upon and extends initial ideas. In this mental journey, mind mapping emerges as a potent visual aid, fostering a radiant mode of thinking. On one hand, it visually maps out the structure and framework of thought or writing, mirroring the intricate logical relationships that bind words, phrases, and sentences within an English composition. On the other hand, this framework acts as a catalyst, sparking the generation of additional phrases and sentences inspired by the central keywords, thereby enriching the writing process. In the course of writing, a word or a phrase can be sure as a starting point or called key word or central word, from which a great amount of related words or phrases will be radiated. In the end, they can be connected with colored lines, and conjunctive words between them and written above the lines. And it can also provide some help to the researchers, who will do researches related to this field, and the teachers who lack experience in writing teaching.

4. Conclusion

The incorporation of mind mapping in English writing instruction has significantly honed students' thinking skills, encouraging them to break free from rigid thinking patterns and embrace divergent thinking in problem-solving. Mind mapping necessitates active participation and independent creation, fostering a learning environment guided by thought that ignites students' enthusiasm and fosters a vibrant classroom atmosphere. This approach not only cultivates students' autonomous learning capabilities but also effectively enhances their writing abilities and divergent thinking skills, underscoring the importance of exploring and leveraging mind mapping in English writing courses.

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