Employing Mind Maps to Develop ESL and EFL Students’ Writing Skill

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Abstract - Writing seems to be a complex and difficult task for students. The mind map technique is beneficial for teaching writing for ESL and EFL students to improve their writing ability as it helps them to generate, elaborate, and organize their ideas so that they could develop their writing from time to time. This paper aims at describing the importance of mind maps to develop students’ writing skill. The method used is library research. The findings show that there are some advantages and disadvantages of mind map technique. In order to make this technique works, the students need to follow some steps before they are able to write using their own language. It is believed that students' writing skill will improve and affect their achievement.

Keywords: mind maps, writing skill

I. INTRODUCTION

A mind map is a graphical way to represent ideas and concepts, allowing people to comprehend, create new ideas and build connections. It is a visual thinking tool that helps structuring information, helping one to better analyze, comprehend, synthesize, recall and generate new ideas. Mind mapping was developed as an effective method for generating ideas by association. This method helps the students to understand certain topics easier. Graphics symbol also help this method with making marks on a flat surface of some kind, but writing is clearly much more than the production of graphics symbol, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences, although again it can say ‘writing’ if it is merely making lists of words, as in inventories of items such as shopping lists.

For many students, writing seems to be a complex and difficult task. Many teachers assume that students can write in their own language or, at least, are in the process of learning to write. However, Scott and Ytreberg (2010: 68) confirmed that most of students will still be copying with the mechanics of writing as well as thinking about what to write [1]. It means that not all of the students can write easily, they have different ability to understand and mastering the materials. Every student has different difficulties in writing, so the teacher has to find to solve and help their problem in writing. Therefore, students need an effective pre-writing planning strategy so as to facilitate and improve their writing skill.

To lead to the research findings, the problems to be dealt with this are formulated as follow:

A. What are the advantages and disadvantages of mind map technique used in writing class?

B. How to use mind map technique to develop students’ writing skill?

Based on the formulation of the problems above, the research is mainly intended to describe the advantages and disadvantages of mind maps techniques and the steps to use mind maps in developing students’ skill particularly in writing. This research will be beneficial to help students in the writing process and provide students with a natural way of thinking and building thoughts on a story plot or theme. It also provides the teachers with insight into their students’ thought process regarding a specific topic as they are able to understand what a student’s prior knowledge was and how well the student understands the assignment or the material being taught. Therefore, it is a very effective way of evaluating students’ understanding.

As a rule, however, it is not suggested to write just one sentence or even a number of unrelated sentences. Producing a sequence of sentence arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways. The sequence may be very short, perhaps only two or three sentences, but the way of the sentences have been put in order and linked together, and the form in a coherent sentence. That form can be called as a ‘text’ [2].

The nature of writing, as defined by Nunan (2003: 88), can also be defined as the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader [3]. Writing gives the students more ‘thinking time’ than they get when they attempt spontaneous conversation [4]. Writing provides more occupation to the students to express their idea into written form. In line with the previous definition, Meyers (2005) states that writing is a way to produce language you do naturally when you speak [5]. It is another form of speaking to other on paper or a computer screen.

The stresses of the importance of composition instruction as it can recognize the importance of generating, formulating and refining writer’s ideas. Instruction in writing must begin with the more fundamental processes whereby writers get their own thoughts in the first place and then get them underway. Instruction in writing, for example is prewriting planning strategies like Mind Mapping, can be taught and applied to enhance students’ writing skills.
II. METHODOLOGY
This paper used a library research method which involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal/expert opinion on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some point [6]. It employs a close reading of texts technique which is categorized as qualitative research. The steps used to analyze the data are finding the background information, finding books and periodical articles, evaluating the sources and citing the sources. When reading the text, the strategies are becoming immersed in the data, reading and re-reading a text, taking notes, reflecting on the data and writing down interpretations.

III. DISCUSSION
A. What is a Mind Map
Mind mapping is an analytical process that involves creatively integrating a combination of visuals, colors, codes, words, and connectors. It can be employed as a method to take notes, to study before an exam, to brainstorm, or make connections between ideas [7]. Then, a mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks or other items linked to and arranged readily around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, and decision making. In other words, a mind map or spider gram is a strategy for making notes on a topic, prior to writing. It is a structured strategy, which shows the hierarchical relationship of ideas, as opposed to an unstructured strategy, in which students produce notes at random on paper.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, Mind Map is a trademark for a type of diagram (= simple plan) with lines and circles for organizing information so that it is easier to use or remember [8]. A mind map is a spontaneous way of showing the association between ideas [9]. Tony Buzan (1995), the inventor of mind map stated that A mind map is a multicoloured and imagecentred, radial diagram that represents semantic or other connections between portions of learned material hierarchically [10]. Mind Mapping is a useful technique that helps you learn more effectively, improves the way that you record information, and supports and enhances creative problem solving [11]. The Mind Map can be applied to every aspect of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance. In the classroom, mind maps can be used for several activities like planning essays, solving the problems, making notes, studying and also presenting certain topics.

Having an organized display of information from the writing process, according to Steele (2005), may help some students as it is more easily converted into a draft, whereas in brainstorming, the random recording of ideas might lead to problems with the structure of students' texts [12].

B. The Advantages of Mind Maps
Making a mind map should be a spontaneous pre-writing activity. It means that the students need to develop their idea faster and put all of the information in one page, a single sheet of paper. Students start with a topic at the centre and then generate a web of ideas from that, developing and relating these ideas as their mind makes associations (Steele, 2005).

The benefits of mind mapping are flexible, it means that brain be able to move fluently to all of direction. Mind mapping can be used in many activities, such as: mind mapping to communicate and do presentation, to plan family activity, to start new effort and how way to summarize content of book [13]. In a mind map, information is structured in a way that resembles much more closely how the brain actually works. It engages the brain in a much, much richer way, helping in all its cognitive functions because this activity is both analytical and artistic.

![Mind Map Uses](image)

![Mind Map](image)

A study by Toi (2009) shows that mind mapping can help children recall words more effectively than using lists, with improvements in memory of up to 32% [14]. It means that mind maps can improve the student's logical opinion. Mind maps work well as their visual design enables students to see the relationship among ideas, and encourages them to group certain ideas together as they proceed. Mind maps can activate the students' thinking ability and creativity, encourage brainstorming, and makes the task livelier and more enjoyable.

In the classroom, mind mapping is a beneficial learning tool to help students brainstorm any topic and think creatively. It is particularly helpful in the writing process and provides students with a natural way of thinking and building thoughts on a story plot or theme. It helps students brainstorm and explore any idea, concept, or problem by taking notes and tasks. It will be easy for them to organize ideas and concepts because it can reduce difficulty in starting writing assignments by
giving students an organizing strategy to get them started [15]. Next, it facilitates better understanding of relationships and connections between ideas and concepts. It also makes students easy to communicate new ideas and thought. After that, students can easily recall information. Ultimately, students’ writing skill will improve and affect their achievement.

C. The Disadvantage of Mind Maps

Even this technique is good enough to improve the students writing skills, there is also have some disadvantages of this technique.

One of the disadvantages from mind map is about the time when this method is used. There era a lot of words that did not correlate with the topics, and it is waste the time when teacher taught their students.

For the students who are extremely logical, mind maps can make them in a big problem, because mind maps encourage creativity and innovation. However, logical students will be hard to trust their creativity and intuition, because logic is the dominant side of their thinking pattern.

The misunderstanding and the differences ideas between teacher and students also make this technique difficult to adapt, because teacher cannot created and personalized their students with teacher’s idea and concept or they will get misunderstanding of it is concept and meaning.

D. How to make mind maps with your students

Mind maps can be fairly simple or highly complex, depending on the topic and the amount of detail included. The students need to follow some steps before they are able to write using their own language independently. The following is procedure of employing mind mapping in the classroom as described by Hedge [16].

1. Choosing a topic

Commonly, students are given a main topic to write on by the teacher. In particular classes, students prefer to nominate the topic themselves. This is great since it can lead to greater interest in the task on the part of the student, as well as, greater knowledge of the topic under study.

The mind map strategy can be used to explore almost any topic though discursive essays and narrative work particularly well as they front students’ ideas and lend them to discussing ideas in groups. In mapping the mind, they should start from the middle by writing the main idea.

2. Note making

From this idea, students jot down all the things associated with the main topic that comes into their minds. Students can create a growing diagram composed of keywords, phrases, concepts, facts and figure in all direction outward the main idea using arrow. Once the topic has been introduced, in encouraging our students with the way closing their eyes and think about it for a minute or two, in silence. Students may create sub-branches that stem from the main branches to further expand on ideas and concepts containing words that elaborate on the topic of the branch it stems from. It is very helpful to keep the topic label as short as possible.

They then have two minutes in which to note down their ideas. If they do not know a word in English, they can write it in L1 at this stage, as dictionaries or too much teacher intervention tend to halt and inhibit the creative flow. Then, working in groups, they can compare and discuss their ideas, perhaps adding to their mind maps as they go. This stage also provides the opportunity for peer teaching, as other students may be available to provide the English word for the ideas.

3. Feedback

The next stage, in which the teacher makes a collective mind map on the board, is optional, but is useful for students who are new to the idea of mind maps, or for weak classes. Students share with each other about what they have jotted down and teacher gives any necessary explanations and suggestions. It is also in this feedback stage that any remaining language problems can be ironed out. As the teacher elicits students’ ideas, and reformulates expressions or corrects, students will learn how to express their ideas in English. This step based on the reasoning behind mind map that is not to think in an ordered or linear way, but explore a topic by moving between its various aspects. Such personalization is said to aid vocabulary learning.

The map is fluid and changeable, and new connections or subgroups can be made, or branches added, as the students make suggestions. The end result should be an organized display of information, showing the central topic, and a number of subtopics and further points that stem from it.

4. Organizing mind maps

In the next stage the students organize their mind maps into a linear format to decide the best way in which to present their points. Branches are then drawn and added as the students suggest new ideas or add ideas to already established aspects. They should think about the overall structure, for example the order in which to relay the information, and then focus on the precise function each paragraph will have in their final text, as this helps to clarify their writing. This can be done in groups or as a class with the teacher leading the discussion. The end result is a map with a number of subtopics or aspects radiating from the central topic (main topic) and with further points added to these.
5. Writing

When the map is reasonably complete, teacher may lead a class discussion on the best order in which points could be presented in a composition. Students should begin to write their own compositions, working in pairs if they want to. After two paragraphs, they should exchange their compositions, so they become readers of each other’s work. This method allows for feedback, and possible re-writing with additional idea from their friends writing text. Once they have finished, they should again exchange of their texts. This method allows for feedback, and possible re-writing with additional idea from their friends writing text.

6. Continuation

Once students are familiar with the idea of making mind maps, they can be encouraged to use this skill for further writing activities. Alternative writing tasks are then can be proposed. It is a useful technique and often improves the clarity and organization of student texts. The continuation of the students writing activities can improve their skill, because they can remember every idea that they have already know and they always used it in every their writing text.

IV. Conclusion

Teaching with mind maps to develop ESL and EFL students’ writing is important. Therefore, ESL and EFL teachers are suggested to apply the technique to teach writing skill. In addition, ESL and EFL students could use mind map to improve their writing ability because it can help them to associate ideas regularly so that they could develop their writing effectively and efficiently.

Mind maps can make and explore the students creative ideas, build plans or even solve the problems, but this technique is not easy to change the teacher’s ways of doing things and changing the students thought, because the way of writing something for each students is quite different and need a great effort and a lot of students are not ready to make it.

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